

THE LOST LITTLE LADY



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THE
LOST LITTLE LADY



"You've teared your coat again, Johnny Clancey!"

THE LOST LITTLE LADY

BY

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AND

alden *Arthur*
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CHAPTER I

MISS EILEEN'S NAMESAKE

AT noon, on a bright morning in the summer of 1863, the huge doorman of the Astor House hurried down to meet a splendid carriage just drawing up to the curb in front of the hotel.

Two boys, who had been sweeping the sidewalk, speedily spread a strip of red velvet carpet across the pavement and up the steps, falling over each other in their effort to accomplish this task in time. A porter, followed by a bellboy, rushed out, taking up positions where they could afford instant service, and a bustle of excitement seemed to indicate that the occupant of the gorgeous equipage was no ordinary mortal.

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Attracted by these preparations a small crowd quickly gathered, to linger for a moment. They hoped to see some notability descend, and there was a hush of expectancy as the hotel attendant opened the door of the carriage, raising his hand to his cap in the military fashion, to salute the arriving guest.

"It must be another Prince," whispered a dainty lady, in a spreading skirt and purple velvet mantle.

"Yes, come to join our army," answered her companion.

Surely, with so much ceremony some distinguished person might have been looked for; but instead there stepped forth, amid a murmur of surprise, the quaintest little figure imaginable.

It was a girl thirteen or fourteen years old, although she gave the impression of being small for her age. Her dress, worn over a wide hoop, was of silk in red, white and blue plaid, edged with a broad band of red velvet cut into a "Wall of Troy" design, below which could be seen hand-embroidered pantalettes of fine white muslin.

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She wore a short sack of red velvet, white stockings and black silk gaiters, while on her head was a pork-pie turban of the national colors, from which hung a veil of beautiful lace.

It was the fashion for the ladies of the North to show the Union colors upon all occasions, and the only criticism that might be offered, according to the standards of that day, was that the small lady's costume was a trifle too elaborate for her years. It was this, perhaps, that gave the women who saw her the feeling that the child had no mother.

She stopped for a moment to speak to her coachman, and it must be confessed that the face disclosed when she lifted her veil, disappointed the gaping crowd. The costume was so elaborate that perhaps they might have been excused for expecting to see a beauty. She was far from that; yet she had a sweet face in spite of the fact that the pink of her smooth, round cheeks was spotted with countless big, brown freckles.

"Fine feathers don't always make fine birds,"

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murmured some one; but the center of the attraction walked on, quite unmindful of the attention she was receiving.

Though she seemed to be looking neither to the right nor the left, she had hardly taken half a dozen steps when she stopped and pointed an accusing finger at a newsboy, standing with the others at the edge of the red velvet carpet.

"You've teared your coat again, Johnny Clancy!" she exclaimed reproachfully. Then hastily correcting herself, "I mean you've torn your coat—but it's just as bad."

"Oh, now! Miss Nora!" replied the boy, wriggling with embarrassment, "'t is just nothing at all. The least bit of a hole that no one but you would be seein'. Beside, 't is bad for business to look too prosperous."

"'T is no ways needful to deceive people in order to grow rich," replied Nora sternly. "Up you march and take that coat off till I mend it. And no back talk about it, Johnny Clancy," and she indicated the entrance with a small finger.

Johnny hesitated for a moment, and then bolted

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for the door, while the little girl followed more sedately.

Scarcely had she entered when a short, thick-set man, very lame in one leg, limped up to the carriage and spoke to the coachman, who touched his hat respectfully.

"What was she sayin' to ye, William?" he asked.

"'T was about my Rosie, sir," the man answered, with some embarrassment. "The child's been sick. Not dangerous, ye mind, but ailin' like, and Miss Nora said somethin' of me stayin' home this afternoon, though 't is in no wise necessary and I can come for ye, Mr. O'Neil, as easy as not."

"She gave ye orders, did she not, William?" asked Mr. O'Neil, a little grimly.

"Faith, she did order me, and that's a fact, but—"

"There's no use of 'buts,' William Kerrigan," Mr. O'Neil cut in; "I advise ye, if you want to hold your job, to obey the orders Miss Eleanor gives ye, nor mind who is inconvenienced."

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"Yes, sir," said William, touching his hat once more.

"And, William," Mr. O'Neil went on, a merry twinkle coming into his eye, "is n't she the fine lady?"

"Aye, that she is," answered William feelingly; "and the tenderest heart she has for sufferin', no matter where 't is found. 'A little mother,' is what I call her, sir."

Mr. O'Neil nodded approvingly.

"She'd take care of anything from a sick cat to her own father," he said, half to himself. "Well, go ye home to your little Rosie and stay there. We'll not be needin' ye this afternoon," and, to avoid William's thanks, he limped rapidly into the hotel.

Mr. O'Neil was delayed in the lobby, but he reached his own parlor just in time to see his daughter bite off her thread.

"Here's your coat, Johnny Clancy," she remarked, handing the garment to the newsboy. "A stitch in time saves nine," as the sayin' is; but hereafter, be mindin' to bring me your tears

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before the hole is big enough to put your head through."

Just then she caught sight of her father standing on the threshold.

"Oh, Daddy!" she cried, jumping up and throwing herself upon him, "you 're home early."

"Aye, in time to catch ye," he declared meaningly, glancing at Johnny Clancy, who, with a grin of embarrassment, slipped out of the room.

"What have I been doin' now?" asked Nora, with a perplexed frown. "Oh, I know. I bit my thread. Well, I'll try not to do it again, Daddy; but I've so much to remember! One does n't learn to be a great lady all in a minute."

"'Tis not the thread at all, at all, I was meanin'," said her father. "'Tis Johnny Clancy's coat. What call have ye to wait on the likes of him?"

"Now, Daddy, what harm can there be in me mendin' a bit of a hole for the boy?" Nora demanded. "You would n't want him to run ragged? But come, take off your own coat and make yourself easy," she went on, standing on

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tiptoe and pulling at the long frock coat her father wore. "'T is seldom I have ye to meself, and I mean to take some comfort in ye now you're here."

"Ye're getting away from the subject," Mr. O'Neil insisted, as he submitted to these attentions. "I've no manner of objections to your motherin' all the little ragamuffins in New York; but if ye must do light housekeepin' for Johnny Clancy, or any one else, let your French mam'selle do the work, and you sit by like a lady and boss her. That's your place."

Nora by this time had gently pushed her father into the big chair before the fire and had settled herself in his lap with a great sigh of content.

"Oh, ye do be scoldin' somethin' awful," she said with a smile. "'T is the hard-hearted man ye are entirely. There's times when ye frighten me, goin' on like this," and she wriggled closer in the strong arms that encircled her.

"Ye're tryin' to put me off, and I'll not have it," said Mr. O'Neil, with a broad grin on his face as he looked down on the child with eyes

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full of love. "Ye know I'm right in what I'm sayin', and—"

"I suppose you are," agreed Nora, her face sobering as she gazed into the fire. "I suppose you are—but 't is when you were a boy I want to talk of. Do ye mind Miss Eileen, you've told me about, back in Belfast? How she looked after ye because ye had no mother, even mendin' your shirt for you, though she was a lady born and you but a ragged urchin runnin' loose in the town. Do ye mind?"

"That I do," replied Mr. O'Neil, with a strong note of tenderness in his voice. "'T was after her I named ye; but 't is far away you've carried me from Johnny Clancy."

"'T is not so far," answered Nora, with a soothing chuckle. "Ye think none the worse of Miss Eileen for mendin' your shirt?"

"The worse of her!" cried Mr. O'Neil in astonishment. "Me, that she fed many's the day. The worse of her! And she, an angel from Heaven condescendin' to mend a bit boy's things with her own hands?"

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"And what differ is there betwixt that poor boy in Belfast and Johnny Clancy in New York?" asked Nora. "How would you have felt if Miss Eileen had said to ye, haughty-like, 'Tim O'Neil, give your shirt to me French mam'selle till she sews the rip in it'? Daddy dear," she went on, leaning back in his arms, "do ye think I'd be humiliatin' Johnny Clancy by showin' I was too good to do his bit of mendin' meself?"

"Nora, me darlin'," said Mr. O'Neil after a pause, "'t is a just rebuke to the pride I take in ye, I suppose; but ye're all I have in the world and 't is savin' ye every bit of work and worry I'm thinkin' of mostly. 'T is your own way ye'll be havin', and I'm not sayin' it is n't a good way, neither, though 't is laughable the care ye take of them that's paid to care for you. There's William, now, sent off for the day, and I've no doubt ye've dismissed your grand French mam'selle."

Nora nodded demurely, with a smile around the corners of her mouth.

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"Her old mother does be grievin' without her," she remarked, "and I get tired of havin' her always under foot. I can't be forever learnin' somethin'. When I come home from me fine school I 'm thinkin' I 'm like a pitcher that 's full. If ye pour more in, it but slops over. Sure 't would be a pity to be wastin' Mam'selle's beautiful French."

"'T is a pity to be wastin' good wages on them that does n't earn them," Mr. O'Neil asserted with a sly glance at his daughter.

"Faith! 't is the stingy man ye 'd have me believe ye," she answered. "Because we pay wages must we stop havin' human feelings? And what call have you to talk like this? 'T is notorious the way ye spoil them that works for you, with extra pay if they make a poor mouth over anything, while the tips ye give the help in the hotel is a scandal." Then, wishing to change the subject and knowing one thing in which her father's interest never flagged, Nora said: "Tell me about the war, Daddy, I never quite forget it since

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all the soldiers stopped here, and I've not seen a paper in days." ¹

"'T is a horrible thing, is war," he returned gravely. "'T is little ye know about it up here, and for your sake I'm glad 't is so. 'T is a grand gineral the rebels is got in Robert E. Lee, an' a grand man, too. He licked Hooker at Chancellorsville, fair and square, for he had fewer men; and my idea of what he's after now is the capture of some big city up North, like Philadelphia, so 's to be able to force the Federal Government to recognize the independence of the Confederate States."

"Huh," said Nora, "if that's what they want I'd give it to 'em, and good riddance."

"No," answered her father, "that's what we

¹ On the outbreak of the war in the spring of 1861, the Sixth Massachusetts regiment, passing through the city, were offered breakfast at the Astor House. An immense crowd assembled, and when the soldiers appeared after the meal, they were greeted by a death-like silence. This was broken by a few bars of "Yankee Doodle" as the New Englanders took up their march. Presumably, the band carried the tune to the end; but it was drowned in the terrific volume of cheers which burst from the multitude—"an astounding roar of appreciation which no one who heard it ever forgot."—E. B. K.

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can't do. 'United we stand,' divided we'd fall,—or be gobbled up by some foreign country that was jealous of our riches. 'T is for their good as well as our own, as they 'll see some day."

"But suppose General Lee takes Philadelphia?" asked Nora, reverting to an idea that had startled her a little, for Philadelphia seemed very near.

"I dunno," replied her father. "I dunno—but I 'm thinkin' in that case I 'll send ye to see the sights of Boston. 'T is a fine educational city, I 'm told."

"Now, Daddy," said Nora, positively, "I 'm not going away from you. Sure the Johnny Rebs is n't cannibals—they won't eat me. And perhaps our own soldiers will beat them."

"I dunno," her father repeated again. "I dunno can they? We 're short o' men. What we lack 's conscription. They 've had it in the South all along, and we 're comin' to it. If he had but the troops he needs, that quare little man in front of Vicksburg might show their fancy soldiers a thing or two. Every man who 's able should

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serve at the front. Then we'd soon beat 'em, an' an end to it."

At that moment a knock at the door interrupted their conversation.

"A lady in the parlor to see ye, sir," the bellboy announced. "Sure I knew she was a lady the minute I set me two eyes on her, but she insists I must tell ye she is one."

"Show her up," answered Mr. O'Neil, and he hastened to get into his coat to receive his unknown visitor.

CHAPTER II

A LITTLE LOST LADY

IT was a very grand and stately lady who was ushered into the O'Neils' parlor. She was quite short, but this in no way detracted from her dignity, and she walked very erect, carrying a small Blenheim spaniel, at the sight of which Nora almost forgot to make her curtsy.

"I 've been sent to you, Mr. O'Neil," she began at once, "because no one else seems to be able to do anything for me." It was clear as soon as she spoke that the newcomer was a compatriot of Mr. O'Neil's.

"Won't you be seated, ma'am?" he replied. "Anything I can do for a country-woman will be a pleasure," he added gallantly. To which the lady made a slight bow of acknowledgment as she took the offered chair.

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Nora, her attention fastened on the dog, stepped forward.

"May I pat him?" she asked, with a smile for the visitor.

"If he will let you," the lady answered.

"Ah, but is n't he the tiny scrap," said Nora, half aloud, as she smoothed the little animal, which showed plainly that he liked it and struggled in his mistress's arms as if he wanted to go to his new-found friend.

"Will he come to me?" asked Nora, and for answer the lady gave the dog to her.

"Sure, that 's the first time I ever saw the Duke take an interest in any one beside myself," she remarked, looking intently at Nora through a glass held to her eyes. "But," she went on, turning to Mr. O'Neil, "let me return to the affair I came on. This war is seriously interfering with most important business of mine. I want to know when you will stop it?"

"Is it *me*, stop the war?" exclaimed Mr. O'Neil. "Faith, it would have stopped before it began if I'd had my way. But there's no man, North

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nor South, can tell you now when it will end."

"You do not realize, probably, how great an inconvenience it is to me," the lady continued in a long-suffering tone. "No one seems to have any time except for their own affairs; but I have been advised to appeal to you because of your influence in various directions."

"I will be delighted to help you, if 't is in me power," said Mr. O'Neil.

"Then I'll begin my tale at once," the lady said, in a very business-like way. "You must know that some years ago my niece married a man by the name of Patrick Cochrane, who turned out to be something of a scapegrace. Well, to make a long story short, they were not happy together, and at last he took himself off secretly, and their little girl with him. We have not seen her from that day to this."

"Ah, the poor mother," sighed Nora. "It must have nigh broken her heart."

"You may well say that," agreed the lady. "It almost broke all our hearts. A sweeter, prettier baby than little Patricia you never saw."

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"What did she look like?" asked Nora, deeply interested.

"She was dark like a Spaniard, with great, wide eyes and a mass of black hair that would be the envy of a woman grown—and in the five years since we've never so much as come on a trace of her."

"'T is a sad tale," Mr. O'Neil interrupted, shaking his head mournfully.

"About two months ago there came a letter from America," the lady continued, "sent by this scamp of a husband. He said he must fight in the war here, and that he had left the little girl in the care of a Mr. Dennis Burke, of Carstairs, in the State of Georgia, wherever that may be. Immediately I wrote to this person asking him to bring the child to New York to meet me, and then sailed for this country. But no word have I had from the man, and I tell you truly I am at my wit's end."

"Humph!" grunted Mr. O'Neil. "You'll pardon me, ma'am, but may I be askin' your name?"

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"Of course! Of course! I am Lady Castleton of Belfast and—"

Mr. O'Neil rose to his feet with an exclamation of surprise.

"Not of the Castle on the hill?" he asked almost breathlessly, stooping toward the lady with much concern.

"The very place," she answered. "I see you know it, though I do not recall you."

"You would n't, me lady," replied Mr. O'Neil. "But who is the niece you talk of? This Mrs. Cochrane? What was her name before marriage. I'm fair tremblin' for your answer."

"She was Eileen Desmond before her marriage," said Lady Castleton, surprised at his agitation.

"I knew it! I knew it!" cried Mr. O'Neil, sitting down in his chair heavily. "'T is my Miss Eileen," he went on to his daughter, excitedly. "We were speakin' of her scarce a minute past. And has she lost her only child? Aye, my, but that's the sad news. Ye did well to come to me," he continued, turning again to Lady

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Castleton. "If the little lady's above ground, I'll find her. 'T is no more than I owe her mother for her goodness to a homeless boy back in Belfast."

After this discovery it seemed as if Lady Castleton and Mr. O'Neil had become old friends, and they talked enthusiastically over plans to find the missing child. They concluded that Dennis Burke's failure to bring the little Patricia to New York probably indicated that he, as well as Patrick Cochrane, was now fighting with the Southern army, and Mr. O'Neil did not conceal the fact that if this were the case it would be difficult to get into communication with them.

"But never fear, ma'am," he assured Lady Castleton. "We'll find her in the end. I'll go to Washington and set some of the government agents on the track at once."

Lady Castleton lived at the fine Fifth Avenue Hotel that had recently been built uptown on the site of Franconi's Hippodrome, and when she was about to go, Nora asked her, rather hesi-

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tatingly, if she knew where a dog like the Duke might be bought.

"I 'm afraid you can't buy one," replied the lady kindly. "He was raised by the Duke, who gave him to me. There 's no other like him on this side of the Atlantic, I fancy; but I hope you will often come to see him."

"Oh, I should be so glad to!" exclaimed Nora, and then Lady Castleton took her leave.

" 'T would be grand to have a little pet like the Duke," Nora murmured, half to herself, as they turned back into their rooms.

"Don't be frettin' about dogs, Nonie dear," said her father, who had caught the drift of her words. "There 's other things in the world besides dogs."

"Aye, there 's children," agreed Nora. "Sure, I can't help thinkin' of poor Miss Eileen, grievin' for her little girl. You 'll be goin' away soon, I 'm afraid," she ended, with a break in her voice.

"My dear, can I do less?" returned Mr. O'Neil. "Ye would n't have me delay lookin' for the child?"

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"No, Daddy, I would n't," she answered bravely, "but, oh, if you knew how lonesome I am when you 're gone from me, and—and I had been hopin' you 'd be stayin' with me for a while."

Mr. O'Neil gathered her in his arms and settled himself in his favorite chair before the fire.

"Ye know, me darlin', that I 'd never be leavin' ye of me own will," he said earnestly, "I had been thinkin' we 'd spend a week or two together; but me conscience would n't let me be wastin' time on this business of finding Miss Eileen's baby."

"Could n't ye be writin' to the people in Washington?" Nora asked hopefully.

"Me dear, 't would be useless," her father answered. "'T is something of a favor I 'm wantin', and they 'll be sendin' letters back askin' 'Why?' a dozen times till I 'd have to go in the end. I must talk to a man face to face, and the quicker 't is done the sooner I 'll be back to you."

"Will ye be goin' at once?" asked Nora, a

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startled look coming into her face. "Sure I thought—"

"I must take the next train, Nonie," he interrupted. "There 's nothin' to hold back for, save the pain I have in me heart at leavin' ye, and that 'll be just as bad to-morrow or the next day. Besides, ye 'd be the first to want me to do me best to find the little lost lady."

"Yes, Daddy," answered Nora. "Yes, 't is right ye should go, and I 'm hopin' you 'll find her; but, oh, Daddy, 't will be a sad Nonie you 'll be leavin' behind you."

Though she tried to be brave, the tears would come and she buried her face in his shoulder.

"Don't be breakin' me heart be cryin'," begged her father. "Don't! Don't!" and then, struck by a sudden remembrance, he put his hand into his pocket and drew forth a small package.

"See, Nonie, I 've a surprise for ye, though I 'most forgot it," and he took off the wrapper and handed her a pink satin case.

Nora dried her eyes and opened the box with a sinking heart. There was nothing to love in

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it, only another possession of the sort she was overburdened with already. A blaze of light greeted her as she lifted the cover. Sparkling inside was a magnificent diamond ring that would have been more suitable for Lady Castleton.

"Ye'd never guess what *that* cost," said her father, seeking in vain for the delight he had counted on. "Sure the other young ladies at your fashionable seminary will be openin' their eyes when they see it,—but there's nothin' too good for my Nonie."

Nora looked at the ring, at a loss to know how to show the joy her father expected. It was his love for her that prompted him to load her with jewels of enormous value and to deck her out lavishly in India shawls and expensive dresses unsuited to her years. But such things were not what she wanted.

"If I can't have a dog like the Duke, a common gutter cat that I could love would be something!" She thought, as she slipped the beautiful ring on her finger.

Aloud she said, with as much enthusiasm as

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she could muster: "Oh, Daddy! 't is a wonderful stone indeed! And I do thank ye for givin' it to me." And she reached up and kissed him.

Nora tried hard to be brave when the time came for parting, but at the last she clung to her father with a sort of desperation.

"I hope you find the lost little lady," she sobbed, "but, oh! I 'll be so lonely till you come back to me."

"Nonie dear, ye 'll tear the heart out of me," said Mr. O'Neil, quite as much upset as his daughter, and at last she let him go; but her father, for all his tender feelings, could scarcely measure the loneliness he was leaving behind him.

For a long time the child sat in his chair before the fire, quite still. Then catching sight of the ring shining on her finger, she held it up and looked at it for a moment.

"Oh, Daddy, Daddy," she murmured, "I know ye mean to be good to your little Nonie, but how can I love a thing like that?" And, with a cry of real pain, she buried her head in her arms and sobbed as if her little heart would break.

CHAPTER III

CAUGHT IN A CROWD

IT was not Mr. O'Neil's fault that his motherless child led such a lonesome life when he was away from her. Everything that he could do to lessen her isolation was done, but servants of one sort or another could not fill the empty place in her heart. Nor could Mr. O'Neil well avoid going away from time to time because, so long as the war lasted, he was in honor bound to fulfil the contracts he had made with the Government. Not that he cared for the money he earned. As he had often said to Nora, "I'm rich before me time. We've more now than we can spend." But he was a staunch Unionist, and had it not been for his lameness, due to a wound received in the Mexican war, he would have been fighting at the front. Debarred from that, he was serving the cause in the best way he

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could and from the best of motives. Otherwise he would never have left his little daughter.

He stayed in New York with her whenever it was possible, but now and then an official letter would come to him in a long, blue envelope without any stamp. This was usually the signal for a hurried departure, so that the sight of it always brought a chill to Nora's loving heart and made it doubly disappointing that he should be obliged to leave her on this unexpected mission.

Nora did not make friends easily at the fashionable school to which she went every day in her splendid carriage. She had been quick to see that there was a difference between herself and the other girls. She came among them a stranger, without acquaintances or relatives, and while many of her classmates tried to draw her out, she was shy with those of her own age and unconsciously repelled their advances. Thus it was that, when her father was forced to leave her, she lived from week to week thinking only of the time when he would be with her again.

Her Fourth of July was quite spoiled by his

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absence, but on the sixth, when she opened her "Tribune" she gave an exclamation of joy.

" 'T is the best three cents' worth I ever had!" she cried to Mam'selle, quite forgetting her French in her excitement. "And won't Daddy be pleased! Sure General Meade has won a great victory at Gettysburg, and I won't have to go to Boston and never see the Duke again!"

For in the days that had followed Mr. O'Neil's departure she had made many visits to Lady Castleton, taking enormous comfort in the little dog who had instinctively understood her loving heart from the first.

One Monday afternoon a little later she told the governess that she would not need her as she was going to the Fifth Avenue Hotel to pay another call upon the Duke. And Mam'selle, thinking of course that Nora would use the carriage, saw no objection to this arrangement, but, glad of the opportunity to spend a few extra hours with her old mother, went off without misgivings as to her charge's safety.

After she was gone, Nora, ever with a

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thought for some one else, remembered that there was a new baby in the coachman's household, and forthwith sent word to William that she would not drive that afternoon.

She dressed carefully, putting on a fine worked muslin over a blue silk slip, for she liked to look her best when she went to see Lady Castleton, and, as an after-thought, she slipped on the huge diamond ring her father had given her just before he left.

She reached the Fifth Avenue Hotel only to learn that Lady Castleton was out, and turned away far from pleased at the prospect of a long and dreary afternoon alone in her rooms.

"I think I'll take a walk," she said to herself. "I wonder could I go as far as the reservoir an' perhaps get some ice-cream at the Croton Cottage? Anyway, I'll try it, and if I tire I can get a stage back. I'm growin' as fat as butter from always ridin'," and she stepped off briskly up Fifth Avenue.

Now, as Mr. O'Neil had once hinted to her, the Union Army was in great need of soldiers and the

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Government had, for the first time during the war, ordered a draft. This meant that any man of suitable age was compelled to serve if his name was drawn, unless he paid three hundred dollars or obtained a substitute. This arrangement caused great discontent among the poorer people who could least afford to spend so much money, and, in New York especially, there were many disturbances.¹

These drafts had begun on the previous Saturday and some confusion had resulted, but no one suspected that there would be any serious outbreak, and Nora, walking alone, had never a thought of danger and was very happy to be out.

She was well on her way when she noticed that there were but few vehicles on the street and no stages at all.

"That's queer," she said to herself, "'t would be a fine joke on me if I had to walk all the way

¹ The Draft Riots in New York City lasted for five days and it was not until troops, including "The Darling 7th," made their appearance that the mob was controlled. Even then it was necessary in one or two instances to use cannon and there were many sanguinary encounters between the rioters and the soldiers before quiet was restored.— E. B. K.

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home whether I liked it or not. 'T is just as well that no one is waitin' on—I mean, *for* me."

It never occurred to her that she might turn around at any time. She had definitely settled in her mind that she would walk till she reached the Croton Reservoir at Fortieth Street, so on she went, continuing her speculations upon the possibility of having to trudge all the way home again.

Above Thirty-sixth Street she noticed that the sidewalks were crowded with people. This was unusual, for it was well uptown where there were no shops.

"I wonder where it is they 're all goin'? Sure, it must be a parade or a regiment comin' in from the war," she thought as she pushed on with the rest.

At Thirty-eighth Street, men and boys poured into the avenue, shouting loudly and carrying banners with "No Draft" printed upon them in huge letters.

Nora saw at once that this was no parade and she felt just a little uncomfortable, for the men were hurrying on as if bent upon some violent

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purpose; but she was not frightened as yet, for no one seemed to pay the slightest attention to her.

"I 'll be at the reservoir in a minute," she told herself. "Then I 'll slip out into a side street. I could n't go down Fifth Avenue with such a crowd runnin' into me. I do wonder what it is all about."

But when Nora reached the reservoir she found it impossible to turn off as she had intended. At Fortieth Street a wild, yelling mob swept into Fifth Avenue from both sides, filling the broad thoroughfare, and Nora, nigh lifted off her feet, was carried with it. She had never been alone in such a great crowd before and she began to grow really alarmed. Close about her were rough men with flushed faces and angry voices, who hurried forward in a mighty mass. It was a menacing throng, bent upon mischief of some sort, and a little girl in the midst of it was in considerable danger. But no one molested her in any way and this reassured her in a measure.

"Sure, I 'll get out of it after a while," she mur-

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mured hopefully, as she swept along. "Perhaps I can slip away at the next block, and then I'll be runnin' home as fast as I can. 'T is awful close," and she shook her shoulders in an effort to give herself more room.

A rough man beside her glanced down and seemed surprised to see her there, but he looked away again almost immediately, appearing to forget her altogether.

At Forty-third Street she found that the mob had grown so thick that she was wedged in till it was almost impossible for her to stir, but the forward movement of the throng had stopped. The crowd stood still now, packed solidly, rank on rank, and wedged tighter and tighter as those behind pressed forward. And now their resentment broke out into words.

"Make it hot for the darkies!" was the burden of the shouts. "'T is them that is the cause of this cruel war! Burn! Burn! Burn!"

The cry rose to a howl of rage and, like magic, countless torches broke into flame.

The Colored Orphan Asylum between Forty-

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third and Forty-fourth Streets was the object of attack, and before Nora realized what was happening, windows were broken, doors burst in, and the great house was set on fire in twenty different places.

"I don't know as I like this!" exclaimed a man, standing near her. "Sure, the childer do no harm."

"They grow up, don't they?" growled another man, with a sour look at the first speaker.

"Don't worry about the little black tykes," said a third. "They 've all been taken out by the back door long ago."

"I 'm very glad to hear that," said Nora, to herself, as she twisted a little to ease her cramped muscles.

A moment later there came a loud tooting of horns and the clatter of the fire apparatus, which took its right of way on the sidewalk amid much shouting through trumpets, causing the mob to surge back. Again Nora was caught up and carried, this time away from the fire into a side street, where, with great good luck, she found shelter

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behind the box around a small tree. Here she clung, and as the crowd swept past again in the wake of the firemen, she was free to move as she pleased.

Now that she was assured that no one was likely to be hurt, she would have liked to stand and watch the magnificent spectacle of the up-leaping flames, but she dreaded to be caught in that panting press, so hastened away from the scene as fast as she could.

Once out of the immediate neighborhood of the fire, she bent her steps down town. Around her many people stood in groups, talking excitedly and watching the flames and smoke that colored the sky in more than one quarter, or yelling back and forth, ran this way and that as if pursuing or pursued. Nora did not like their looks, and her one desire now was to be safe home at the Astor House.

Near the ruins of the Bull's Head Hotel, she was almost knocked off her feet by a small figure which scurried out of the cross street and collided with her at the corner. For an instant she faced

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a little girl whose labored breathing was plainly audible; then the child darted across the street and tried to conceal herself among some weeds growing in a vacant lot.

Almost immediately a crowd of boys swept up to the spot.

"Where did she go?" cried one of them.

"There she is," shouted another, pointing to the bushes, which were too thin to hide the breathless fugitive.

"Now we've got you," they chorused. "Come out till we pull your wool for you."

"Who is it?" cried Nora, forgetting herself in pity for the hunted creature shuddering behind the bush.

"One of Old Abe Lincoln's pets," a boy answered her, while the chorus again took up its threat.

"Come out of that, you little darky!"

The small huddled form never stirred.

"Then we'll drive you out!" was the next shout, and a volley of stones rained upon the bushes.



"I shan't let you do it," she cried

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"For shame!" cried Nora, running up to them. "For shame! to be hurtin' a little girl like that. Stop it, I tell you!"

For a moment the boys looked at her in astonishment, then the oldest of them walked up to her menacingly.

"Ye 're one of them darky lovers, I 'm thinkin'. They 're killin' 'em over on Lexin'ton Avenoo, and I guess this one in the bushes will be lucky to get off with a few stone bruises. Anyways, you go on about your business," and he reached down and took up another stone.

But Nora, usually the mildest of little maids, had in her make-up a hot temper which went with her reddish hair and hazel eyes. Moreover, her heart had gone out to the poor little child hidden in the bushes, and she had no fear of the boys. With a bound she planted herself before the one who had just spoken.

"I shan't let you do it," she cried, facing the young ruffian with blazing eyes. "If it were a dog I would n't let you, and, darky or no, you shan't hurt her."

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The smaller boys drew back and the oldest stood dumb for a moment, then with a cry of rage he lifted his arm.

"I 'll show you whether ye 'll stop me or not!" he shouted.

CHAPTER IV

A TIGHT PLACE

NORA was not afraid as she held her ground in front of the gang leader who seemed about to strike her. She was not thinking of herself at all. Her concern was for the little child hidden like a timid animal in the bushes; but the blow did not fall, for even as the boy raised his hand, the sound of running feet arrested him.

"Hey there! What ye doin', Micky Donovan?" came a shout, and the next instant a figure bounded in between them. "Be the powers if it ain't Miss Nora!" was the astonished exclamation, and she looked into the face of Johnny Clancy.

Nora was the first to break the momentary silence.

"Well," she said, practically, "I 'm glad you 're here, Johnny Clancy, though I can't say I like the

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company ye keep. Send 'em off about their business, and leave the child yonder to me."

Nora, used to being obeyed, spoke with assurance; but Johnny Clancy knew the boys he had to deal with; moreover, he was aware of the unsettled condition of the city and the helplessness of the police. Micky Donovan and his gang were not likely to be easy to handle.

"It's all right, fellers," he said, more confidently than he felt. "It's all right! She's Irish!"

"Then why should she be takin' up with a black?" demanded three or four in chorus.

"Sure, she's tender-hearted," Johnny answered promptly. "And what do we care, so long as she's Irish, hey?" He spoke with a gaiety he was far from feeling.

For a moment there was a disposition on the part of the ten or a dozen boys to move to some more exciting scene. Several called "Come on," but Micky Donovan had yet to be reckoned with.

"Stay where ye are," cried he, and then, addressing Johnny, but with a nod toward Nora,

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"Irish or no, she's rich, and if she wants a slave she can pay for it."

This was a pleasing idea to the other boys and they came back and pressed closely about the three in the center of the little group.

"Pay—" Johnny began scornfully, but Nora cut him short.

"Sure, I can pay!" she exclaimed. Money to her was the last consideration. "Sure, I can pay—and willing," she went on fumbling in her pocket for her purse. Then her face fell. "Faith, some one must have robbed me," she murmured, nervously pulling off her gloves in order to search the better. But, with the removal of the glove, the ring her father had given her blazed out on her finger and Johnny saw Micky Donovan's eyes fasten on it greedily.

"Never mind the money!" cried Micky. "Give us *that*," and he pointed to the ring.

"Ah, 't is nothing but paste," laughed Johnny, derisively. "Do ye think a slip of a girl like that would wear real sparklers?" He hoped to put them off but Nora spoiled his plans.

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"'T is not paste!" she exclaimed indignantly. "Think ye Daddy would be givin' me imitations? Sure, it came from Tiffany's, and 't is no paste they sell. But," she went on, turning to Micky, "I'll not give it to ye, mind that; for 't was a present from me father."

"Then ye can't have the girl," he answered, with a nod toward the bushes where the child still crouched.

"I'll give ye a five dollar gold piece, when I get back to the hotel," Nora proposed, but the leader of the gang shook his head.

"'T is the ring I mean to have," he said threateningly, and took a step toward her.

She, seeing the determined look in his face, moved back and, for the first time, felt some fear for herself. Johnny Clancy was at his wit's end. He knew that Micky Donovan would never be satisfied now until he obtained the ring. The sight of it was like a red rag flaunted before a bull, and he could think of no way to save it; for, though he was ready to fight as best he could for

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Nora, the odds against him made the outcome certain.

"Come, give up the ring and take your slave," growled Micky. "Don't be foolin' about it any longer. We can't stay here all day."

Just then Johnny had an inspiration. With pretended alarm he stood on his toes and looked up the street.

"Cheese it!" he shouted at the top of his lungs. "Here's the peelers!" and without a word he turned and ran as fast as he could.

The suddenness of the cry and the example had their effect. In a panic the ragged horde took to their heels, disappearing around the nearest corner. In almost less time than it takes to tell it, Nora found herself alone.

"Well, was n't that the mean trick of Johnny Clancy's?" she said, half-aloud. "To go off and leave me like that!" But scarcely had she uttered the words than the boy was back at her side, having hidden in a door-way till the rowdies had passed him and then returned with all speed.

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"We must run for it, Miss Nora," he panted. "They 'll be back fast enough when they find there 's not a peeler within a mile. Hurry now!"

"Fetch the little darky, then," said Nora.

"No, she must shift for herself," answered Johnny. "'T is our own skins we must think of now."

"For shame!" said Nora, reproachfully. "Would ye leave the little thing to be stoned by a parcel of wicked boys? Is it afraid of them ye are?"

"'T is not for meself I 'm afraid," answered Johnny truthfully. "If it was only Micky Donovan, I 'd soon show him. But what can I do again' a dozen of 'em, Miss Nora? Come now, for I 'm fearful they 'll be back any minute."

"I 'll not go without the child, and that 's flat!" cried Nora valiantly. And she crossed the street to where the little figure still huddled behind the bushes.

"Come out, dearie," she whispered. "There 's no one to hurt you now."

"Oh, Miss Nora, ye don't know what ye 're

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doin'!" exclaimed Johnny in despair. "The kid can find her mommer. She's a big, fat woman, black as a coal. She couldn't miss her if she tried. I saw the start of the fuss on the other side of Lexin'ton Avenoo. Her mommer tells the girl to run when the boys begins chivying her. They'll find each other, never fear. 'Tis not *her* Micky Donovan will be botherin' with now, but you and your ring. Do come along," he ended pleadingly. "Why should you risk so much for a little darky?"

As he spoke the girl crawled out of the bushes and looked up at them.

"Johnny, you and the boys are wrong entirely," cried Nora. "Her eyes are as blue as violets."

"Then there's darkies with blue eyes," answered Johnny, quite exasperated, expecting every moment that the gang would put in an appearance. "Anyways, it has naught to do with us. We must go, or 't will be too late."

"I've said I'll not leave her," said Nora, positively.

"Then take her, too,—only be quick about it,"

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Johnny answered, realizing at last that Nora would have her way. "Come on, the both of ye."

Nora took the strange child's hand and started forward, but the girl hung back, shaking her head.

"I 'm going to find my mammy," she announced, speaking with a decided Southern drawl.

"But, dearie, the bad boys will catch you if you stay," pleaded Nora, while Johnny looked up and down the street apprehensively.

"I 'm not afraid of the boys," the little girl answered calmly. "I just ran away so they would n't bother Mammy. She's too fat to run, you know."

"You can't go back!" exclaimed Johnny, almost roughly. "They 're killin' the likes of you over on Lexin'ton Avenoo."

The slim little figure of the girl stiffened and she looked at Johnny disdainfully.

"I don't know what you mean," she said, "but I must go back to Mammy. No one would dare kill her—and I 'm not allowed out on the street

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alone," she added as she took a step away from them.

The strange child was nearly as tall as Nora but it was apparent that she was much younger. A mass of curling black hair fell in disorder about her face, and the blue eyes with the long curved lashes looked as if framed in ebony. Her flushed skin had an olive tone, but her features were fine, and her thin, rather long nose, was delicately molded. These details Nora took in at a glance, thinking she had never seen any one so pretty before. The child's beauty owed nothing to her clothing. Her dress was faded and showed many patches, put on bunglingly with coarse thread as if she might have done it herself; yet in spite of her tousled appearance she held her head high and had an unmistakable air of breeding.

Nora's warm heart went out to her at her first glance and, as the little figure moved away, she put out her hand and grasped the thin arm.

"You can't go alone to look for your mother,"

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she said, positively. "Johnny and me—I mean I—we 'll take you home."

"We can't take her nowhere," Johnny burst out. "I've told you we've got to cut an' run."

"The house is burned down where we lived," the child said, without any show of emotion. "They threw all the furniture into the street and then set fire to the house."

"Oh, why did they do that!" exclaimed Nora distressed.

"Because we lived there, I suppose," the child answered, flushing darkly but looking Nora squarely in the face.

"She 's one of the Orphant 'sylums, as ye might have guessed," Johnny muttered, but neither of the girls paid the slightest attention to him.

"I must go now and find my mammy," the little girl said again. Then, with a slight inclination of her head, as if bidding good-by to old friends, she turned to walk up the street.

Nora was beside her on the instant and Johnny followed. They had taken perhaps two steps

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when the boy's sharp eyes saw a head showing around the side of a house at the far corner. He knew that red thatch of Mick Donovan's and, realizing that what he had been expecting was about to happen, he wasted no further time on diplomacy. Nor did he stop to consider the truth of his statements. Nora's ring was a prize that would tempt Micky and his gang to greater lengths than he cared to think of, and he must save Miss Nora. Evidently the only way to get these two girls to do as he wished was to appear, at least, to give them their own way.

"Stop!" he whispered to them. "Mick Donovan is up at the next corner. I saw the brick top of him and he's waitin' for the rest of the gang to come up. Follow me now and run your hardest—and as for your mommer," he went on, addressing the strange girl wrathfully, "'t is out of our way, but I'll take ye to her if ye but hurry."

A glad look in the child's face was all the answer he needed, and Nora, too, nodded agreement, so he set off at a smart run.

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The girls followed Johnny blindly, and he took them a rough road. Through vacant lots they tore, crouching down as they came to a street and waiting till the boy had looked ahead to see that all was safe, then on again amid weeds and burdocks that seemed to snatch at them as they flew past. Into strange yards and out again, climbing fences and jumping pools of water, till all three were panting for breath, but Johnny would not let them rest and kept urging them to greater efforts.

"Sure, Miss Nora, they're right behind," he declared. "Do ye think they don't know these lots like their own ten toes? Hurry the best ye can."

At length Nora stopped with a hand pressed to her side, where the pain was greatest.

"Oh, Johnny," she gasped. "I can't go another step. Are n't we most there?"

The boy halted and stood beside her, looking about him.

"Miss Nora, we must go on," he urged anxiously. "If you only had n't let 'em see that

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sparkler they would n't have bothered; but now they 'll hold on, unless we can lose them."

Both he and the little stranger seemed quite fresh after their moment's rest, and Nora looked at them enviously.

"'T is because I 'm such a little puddin'," she panted. "'T is spendin' me life in a house or a carriage does it. But the pain in me side is easier and I 'll do the best I can."

On they went again, but the halt had lost them ground. Now and then they could hear behind them the call of one of the gang to another as they picked up the trail. Nora uncomplainingly exerted herself to the utmost, but her wide skirts and ample flounces made running very difficult, and at last, tripping over a loose stone, she fell prostrate in a thicket of jimson weed.

The sound of her fall brought the others to a stop and Johnny, with a cry of despair, ran back and knelt down beside her. She was lying prone, with her eyes closed, and he feared she was injured.

"Are you hurted, Miss Nora?" he asked trem-

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blingly. She did n't reply for an instant but continued to take in long, deep breaths to ease her tired lungs. At last she opened her eyes.

"No, I'm not hurt, but I'm dead beat and that's a fact. I could n't run another step if I was to die for it. Take the little girl and go on."

"I'll do no such thing!" declared Johnny firmly. "I'll carry you."

"Don't talk foolishness," gasped Nora.

"But they'll be up with us in a minute," pleaded Johnny; "can't ye make another try?"

"Oh, Johnny, don't ask me," cried Nora, and she closed her eyes again wearily.

"'T is lost we are," muttered Johnny to himself, "and what the gang will do to us after the chase we've led 'em I don't know."

CHAPTER V

THE GIRL WITH THE DIAMONDS

JOHNNY stood for a moment looking down at the exhausted Nora scarcely knowing what to do. He was devoted to her because of her many kindnesses to him and he felt keenly the responsibility of protecting her. Vindictively he eyed the strange girl standing passively beside him and blamed her for the trouble they were in.

“See what you ’ve done!” he snapped. “’T is all your fault, and you’re not worth it. Twenty of ye would n’t be worth a hair of Miss Nora’s head.” In his perplexity he cared little whether his words hurt her. Nora was his one and only anxiety, and she it was who resented his words.

“For shame, Johnny Clancy,” she exclaimed. “Talkin’ that way to a poor little girl.”

“I don’t mind what he says,” the stranger re-

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marked coolly. "But I am going back. It's me they want, and they'll follow once they see me."

"I won't let you," cried Nora, raising up and seizing her hand. "They might hurt you."

"They won't catch me," answered the girl confidently. "I can run very fast, and now I'll have a good start."

"No," said Nora shortly, "I'll not have it that way." She got to her feet with an effort. "Come on."

But strange to say Johnny was now not so eager to go as he had been. Any minute for the last five he had expected that Micky Donovan and his crowd of roughs would be upon them. He was certain that the leaders could not be very far behind, and the fact that they had not put in an appearance seemed suspicious.

"What are they up to?" he muttered to himself, but Nora caught the words.

"What are they up to?" she repeated, with a quick glance at the boy.

"'T is more than I can guess, Miss Nora," he

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whispered in reply. "They should have been here by now. 'T is queer, indeed, what 's keepin' them."

"Perhaps they've lost us," suggested Nora hopefully.

"No fear," answered Johnny; "they know where we are, all right. But sit ye down here and I'll be going off to see."

A moment later, crouching low, he began to worm his way through the bushes.

Nora turned to the girl beside her and looked into the dark face curiously. She felt strongly drawn to this self-possessed stranger who looked so pathetically babyish. There was something of mystery about her that excited Nora's interest, though, at bottom, her feeling was one of compassion. "The poor little thing!" was Nora's thought, as she noted the faded dress and darned stockings. Her heart went out to the forlorn little figure, and a plan was already forming in her mind that held out most wonderful possibilities.

"You don't seem at all afraid," she said at

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last, taking the child's brown hand in her own and patting it lovingly.

"I 'm wondering where my poor mammy is," answered the little girl, a worried look on her face. "I wish I had n't run away from her."

"Oh, we 'll find her," answered Nora encouragingly, "don't you fear."

Nora's impulse was to soothe the child's anxieties, even though in her heart she had not great confidence that it would be easy to find the old negress.

Just then Johnny came creeping back.

"'T is worse than I thought, Miss Nora," he said, sitting down beside them.

"What do ye mean?" asked Nora. "How can it be worse?"

"Sure, we 're surrounded. There 's no chance for us to get away at all, at all," he answered despondently.

"Well, an' why don't they come and take us then?" asked Nora. "They must know we 're here."

"They 're waitin' for it to get darker," replied

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Johnny. "At least that's the only thing I can think of. If we go on, they will drive us into the lonely lots, and if we stay where we are, they will come when screamin' won't do no good. They've got us, Miss Nora, and that's a fact."

"What will we do?" gasped Nora. "I won't let them have the ring, and that's all there is to it. Where are they? Come, they sha'n't scare me. I'll face them."

"Oh, Miss Nora, what are ye thinkin' of?" cried Johnny in deep dismay. "You don't know Mick Donovan or you'd never be suggestin' such a plan. He'd take it from you, an' you strugglin' all you'd a mind to, an' the rest of the crowd a-holdin' ye, an'—an'—I hate to think of it, an' you that kind-hearted." Johnny Clancy, well-nigh overcome with emotion, let his head hang on his breast.

"If it's *her* they're after," said the strange child with a nod toward Nora, "I'll make them take me for her, if she'll lend me her hat and veil."

"What do you mean?" demanded Johnny, and

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then as the plan took shape in his head he thumped his fist on the ground.

"Oh, the dunce I am," he muttered. "Of course that 'll do it—and I never thought of it. You 're no fool," he went on addressing the child, "if your mommer is a darky," and he rose to his feet with an air of great determination. "Give me your hat, Miss Nora."

"What for?" asked Nora, not at all catching the drift of these last remarks.

"'T is a chance to save ye," said, Johnny, excitedly. "You can find your way to the Harlem Station. 'T is in a field near Fortieth Street."

"I 'll not be parted from the child," interrupted Nora positively.

"Ye 'll not need to be!" answered Johnny, exasperated. "But listen. Give me your hat. They 'll have small chance of catchin' me when I'm off alone."

Nora, quite bewildered, handed him her dainty Italian straw flat, with its floating streamers, and Johnny set it on his head.

"When you get to the station," he went on,

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"you can take a car through the tunnel to Twenty-sixth Street and from there you can walk to the Fift' Avenoo Hotel. They 'll send ye home in a coach, sure. An' here 's carfare for the two of ye. Now do ye understand?"

"Not a word do I understand," replied Nora, taking the money without argument on that score. "How are we to get away from here with all those boys waiting for us to make a move?"

"'T is *me* they 'll be follyin'," Johnny explained. "Seein' that hat and veil they 'll be sure 't is you, and they 'll care naught for me or the girl."

Johnny was about to start when the little stranger stopped him.

"The hat will do while you are in the weeds," she pointed out, "but the minute you cross the street they'll see the trick. You must have a dress, too."

"Ah, now I can't be wearin' girl's duds," answered Johnny.

"You must," said the little girl, briefly. And without further argument, she took off the

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worked muslin that Nora wore over her blue silk slip and dressed the boy in it.

Johnny, though he disliked it, submitted with a good grace. What the girl said was true enough, the trick would soon be discovered unless he wore a skirt of some sort.

"The waist-band is rather tight," said Nora, now much interested, "but the sash will hide that."

"I wish we had some hoops for him," the stranger suggested anxiously, at which Nora could n't help giggling, though the child was quite in earnest. "I hope the boys won't notice how sleazy he looks."

Johnny, ready at length, stopped for one last word.

"You two crawl back near the fence," he instructed them. "I don't know will they look for you, but you 'd better be careful. When I 'm well away, and you 're rested, Miss Nora, you can go on as slow as you like. I 'll hardly dare come back for ye, you understand. 'T would be leadin' the gang to where you was. Now I 'm off."

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Johnny slipped out to the other side of their cover, ran along close to the fence and was away like the wind, the white overdress showing plainly, and the long ribbons on the hat streaming out behind.

Immediately from many points there rose shouts of warning.

"They 've separated," came one call.

"Law! we can't chase three of 'em," shouted another.

"After the girl!" cried a voice that was recognized as that of the dreaded Micky.

There was a patter of feet, a crackling of the undergrowth and several of the boys ran past the two girls crouched in the bushes against the fence.

"I seen her," said one of them.

"The rest of us ain't blind," was the retort.

"Where do you think Johnny Clancy and the darky girl went?"

"Who cares for them?" shouted Micky. "We must have the girl with the ring. Barney, you and Pat go 'round by the Avenoo and head her off. We don't want her runnin' to the West side.

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Drive her over to Lexin'ton if you can. Then it'll be easy. Hurry now, after her."

Nora and the strange child waited breathlessly until all sounds of the pursuit had died away, then they crept out warily.

"That boy was right," whispered the little girl. "Those others are just—just—" she hesitated trying to find the right word, "just stealers," she ended.

"I hope they don't harm Johnny," said Nora, beginning to grow anxious now that he was gone.

"They'll have to catch him first," said her companion with much assurance. "When he gets away from them he can slip out of your dress and be a boy again, you see."

"Aye, that's right too," agreed Nora, much comforted. "Come now, we'll be movin' on."

But the other did not stir. She was gazing at Nora attentively.

"You look so different without your flat," she said with an air of great wisdom. "If I were you I'd throw away those gloves. They seem funny when you've no hat,—and you must hide

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that ring. Some one else might see it and want to take it. I wish we could do something to make me look different, too, in case we should meet any of those boys again."

All these suggestions were so practical that Nora was impressed.

"My, but you 're the wise little thing," she said admiringly. "I 'll tell you what we 'll do. I 'll give you my hair-net, that will change you," and she pulled it off as she spoke, letting down a bronze mane over her shoulders.

"What pretty hair!" exclaimed the strange child, impulsively.

"Do you think so?" inquired Nora anxiously. "I can't see that it 's so ugly myself, though it is an awful' unfashionable color. Of all the lovely ladies in the hair-dresser's window there 's none that wear it."

"I like it," said the girl gravely.

"I 'm glad," replied Nora, "but what 's to become of this ring that 's got us into all this trouble? I 'd lose it out of my pocket, like I did my purse. Perhaps it 's better to wear it, after

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all. I can turn in the stone,—so,” and she held out her hand with the diamonds shining in the palm.

But the child shook her head positively.

“You must wear it around your neck,” she insisted. “No one will see it then. These bad people in this town, they steal. They took Mammy’s best bandana with a lot of things in it.”

“But I’ve nothing to tie it on with,” Nora complained, though she was ready enough to fall in with the suggestion.

The girl put her hand to her neck and drew out a fine gold chain.

“Take this,” she said, trying to unfasten it.

“I’ll not take your pretty chain,” replied Nora, “but I’ll put the ring on it and you can carry it for me. ’T will be as safe with you as with me, and no one will think of your wearing diamonds around your neck.” And with deft fingers she carried this plan into effect, tucking the sparkling jewel inside the collar of the faded dress.

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"We 're going to be great friends, are n't we?" she went on, for this little act of trustfulness seemed to draw her nearer the child. "Tell me, dear, what 's your name? Mine is Nora O'Neil."

"My name is Bébée," was the simple answer.

"Bébée's French, is n't it?" asked Nora.

"Is it?" questioned Bébée, and then, "Yes, I suppose it is."

"And what 's the rest of it?" demanded Nora with an inviting smile.

But the child's expression changed and her mouth closed firmly.

"It 's just Bébée," she said, positively. "Come, we must go on before it 's dark," and she led the way out of the bushes.

Nora followed without a word, her mind dwelling on the evident reluctance of the child to answer her last question.

"These poor little darkies don't have any last names, I guess," she thought; then hugging to her heart a plan that had come to her, she murmured to herself, "'T will be better than any dog!" And with a look of joy in her face, she

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kept close to Bébée, as they picked their way out of the vacant lots into the streets again.

The long July day was coming to an end, and the glare of the burning buildings began to show red against the sky as the dusk deepened. The two trudged on, speaking little, but going boldly forward now that their fear of Micky Donovan and his gang was past. However their progress was slow and, in their flight with Johnny, Nora had entirely lost her bearings.

"Do you know where we are, Bébée?" she asked at last, coming to a stop.

Bébée looked at her in surprise.

"Of course I do," she answered readily.

"Well, that's good," breathed Nora with a sigh of relief. "Where are we, dear?"

"In New York," said Bébée, "with the ab'litionists."

"Of course," laughed Nora. "But where? What street?"

"Oh, that I don't know," the child replied indifferently.

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"But we can't go on like this," said Nora. "We'll fall in our tracks. I'll have to ask."

She looked about her, trying to pick out some one whom she would dare to stop and question. There were many people on the streets, hurrying along, paying scant attention to any one else; for all seemed burdened with the spoils of some looted house. One old hag, bent nigh double with the weight of a bundle of silken draperies, passed close to them, but Nora drew back with a shake of her head.

"Not that one," she whispered to Bébée. "I'll wait till I see an honest old woman."

"If 't is an honest woman you're looking for, here she is, dearie," said a harsh voice behind them, and a restraining hand was laid on Nora's shoulder.

The little girl turned with a start of surprise, to look up into a pair of small, greenish eyes, set very near together in a coarse, red face.

"Will you please tell us the shortest way to the Harlem Station or, if it's nearer, to the

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Fifth Avenue Hotel?" she asked as politely as she knew how.

The woman's appearance did not make her feel very confident, and she was glad she had taken Bébée's advice and concealed the ring. There was nothing about her now, she thought, that any one would want.

The stranger threw back her head and laughed loudly.

"The Fift' Avenoo! 'T is a real swell I've found," she cried. "Come over here to the light till I have a look at ye," and she took Nora roughly by the shoulder and propelled her forward.

"How dare you touch her?" cried Bébée, and Nora had a glimpse of the child glaring angrily at her burly captor, as she tugged at the arm that held her new friend.

"Let go," cried the woman and threw Bébée off with a jerk.

Nora had a call for help on her lips, when a crowd of boys turned into the street not far from

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them. The woman saw them too, for she shouted loudly.

“Hey, Micky, you spalpeen, come here this instant. I’ve been needin’ ye these two hours gone. Come here, I say, or ’t will be the worse for you.”

Nora, with a sinking heart, watched one of the boys detach himself from the group and slink forward. As he reached them his eyes opened wide while he looked at her in astonishment.

“’T is the girl with the di’mon’s!” cried Mick Donovan; “I’ve been chasin’ her all over the West side. Where’s Johnny Clancy an’ the little darky? And how did *she* get here?”

Nora, forgetting her own peril for the moment, would have cried out to Bébée to fly, but Bébée had already disappeared.

CHAPTER VI

NORA MADE PRISONER

THE discovery that Bébée had vanished brought a pang of regret to Nora and made her forget her own situation for the time being; then, with a feeling of relief, she decided that the child had only hidden because she carried the ring and no doubt would reappear as soon as Nora was out of this latest difficulty.

At the word "di'mon's" the woman's grip had fastened more tightly on her arm.

"What was ye sayin' about di'mon's, Micky?" she demanded of her son.

"'T was a great shinin' ring she had on her finger," the boy answered. "Sure I never see such a big one."

"Have ye been robbin' down on Twinty-ninth Street?" asked the woman, shaking Nora. "I

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hear they've been cleanin' out a jewelry store down there."

"I've not been near Twenty-ninth Street," declared Nora, "and I have n't any ring." She held out her hand to show them.

"'T was on that same finger she's holdin' out to ye that I saw it," Micky broke in. "'T was as big as a bean and shone like a star."

"Why did ye be lettin' her make off with stolen property?" cried Mrs. Donovan in a threatening tone. "Now hand it over to me!" she added, turning to Nora."

"But I tell you I have n't it," Nora insisted.

"Don't be tellin' me a lie," said the woman.

"Where's the little darky girl that was with ye?" demanded Micky.

"I don't know," answered Nora. "She was here a minute since."

"That's true," declared Mrs. Donovan. "There was a black-lookin' creature with her. Where's she got to, I wonder?" and the woman peered about her in the fast-gathering darkness.

"Mommer," said Micky, in a soft voice, "sure

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the young lady has n't the ring, as ye can see, and I misdoubt she's tired and would like to go home. Let her call her darky friend an' they can be off together."

For a moment Mrs. Donovan and her son eyed each other, and a glance full of meaning passed between them.

"Faith, Micky, 't is the soft-hearted boy ye are, and right, too!" said the woman with an entire change of tone. "The poor colleen is tired, as ye say. I doubt not, me dear," she went on addressing Nora, "that the other young one is but hidin' for fear of us. Darkies is that timid. Call out to her and ye can both be goin' home."

"And will you tell me how to get to the hotel?" asked Nora, only anxious to be gone.

"To be sure, Micky will put you safe on your way, me dear," Mrs. Donovan assured her.

Nora was not entirely deceived by this change of tactics on the part of Mrs. Donovan and her son, but it was clear that if she did n't fall in with their suggestion they would immediately come to the conclusion that Bébée really had the

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ring they were looking for and would start a search for her, so she decided to do as she had been bidden.

"Bébée! Bébée!" she called, softly at first, and then, as no one appeared, more loudly. "Bébée! Come, dearie, 't is all right, and we 'll be goin' away together. Bébée, please come."

Then all three waited in silence; but there was no sign of the child, and Mrs. Donovan lost her patience.

"Let her go," she snapped, returning to her harsh manner. "We 've got one of 'em, and we 'll make sure the ring's not on her. Come along, Miss, I 'll show you the way home," she ended, laughing derisively as she clutched Nora by the arm.

"Oh, don't," cried Nora, shrinking away as far as she could. "Indeed I have n't the ring."

"Then where is it?" demanded the woman, threateningly.

It was on the tip of Nora's tongue to tell, but the thought of the possible consequences to Bébée kept her silent.

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"They 'd make nothin' of hurtin' a poor little colored girl," she said to herself.

"Why don't you speak?" cried Mrs. Donovan, tightening her grasp on Nora's shoulder. "Where 's the di'mon's?" She waited a moment, but receiving no answer went on. "So you won't tell? Is that it? Well, it may be ye have it on ye. 'T is easy to make sure of that, and if ye 've not got it—" she paused menacingly, "we 're goin' this way now." With which she jerked Nora round and walked her down a side street toward the East River.

They had gone about a block when Mrs. Donovan turned to her son.

"Go back and search for that other child—and mind ye find her. Ye need n't come home till ye do."

"I 'll do me best," said Micky, and disappeared in the gloom, while Nora and his mother penetrated a little further into what she could see was a squalid part of the city.

"Where are you taking me?" cried Nora,

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struggling to be free of the iron grip on her arm.

"I 'll soon show you," answered the woman, dragging her forward, and a half-block further on, she turned into a little house and closed the door behind her.

"Here we are," she said, with a malicious laugh. "It may not be so good as the Fift' Avenoo, but 't is the best home you 'll have till ye tell me where that di'mon' ring is."

Mrs. Donovan led the way toward a rickety staircase at the back, but instead of ascending, she opened a door behind it and pushed Nora in. It was a good-sized room they entered, fairly clean though far from tidy, and the furnishings showed Nora that it was the kitchen and parlor combined.

Mrs. Donovan wasted no time on ceremony, but at once began her search; even going to the length of feeling in the toes of Nora's shoes, and commented enviously the while on the fineness of her clothing.

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"Must have cost a mint of money!" she muttered to herself. "They 'll pay for her keep if I have to hold her long." Then to Nora, "Will you tell me where that ring is? I'm askin' ye for the last time."

"I do not know," answered Nora, feeling that she was telling the truth so long as she had no knowledge of Bébée's whereabouts.

"Then in there ye go till ye get a better memory," cried Mrs. Donovan in a rage, and she thrust Nora through a back door into a tiny room. The grating of the key in the lock told her she was a prisoner.

With a little moan of despair she sank to the floor and covered her face with her hands.

CHAPTER VII

JOHNNY GOES TO THE ASTOR HOUSE

WHEN Johnny Clancy left Nora and Bébée hiding among the weeds in the vacant lot, he did not run his hardest at first, fearing that his pursuers would perceive the trick he was attempting to play on them. He was glad when he heard the shouts that told of their starting after him, and, with much cunning, he ran in and out of bushes, or behind whatever afforded shelter, giving the boys momentary glimpses of him, but still seeming to endeavor to keep hidden. He had no desire to get too far ahead, but bent his energies to encouraging his pursuers to hold to the chase.

As they drew away from the starting point, he turned toward the west. His aim was to get into the rocks and ravines in that part of the island. The two boys who had been de-

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tailed by Micky Donovan to head him off did their best, but he eluded them and flew on with less caution, though he still took pains not to show himself too openly. Seeing what he was trying to do the gang redoubled their efforts, shouting back and forth to each other in a frenzied attempt to stop him. But by this time the main point of his purpose had been attained, already the girls must have left their hiding-place and, once gone, they would not easily be picked up again. Moreover it was growing dusk, which would increase their chances of escape.

"Sure, they're safe as safe, be now," he said to himself, as he raced along.

When at length he had gained the rocky hills near the Hudson he felt free to slip from his pursuers; but, knowing that they were still upon his trail, he went on for another five minutes to make sure that he had led them far enough away.

At length, however, he turned into a deep cleft between two hills, and tearing off Nora's dress and hat, he bundled them back of a stone. A

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moment later he ran out at the other end of the cleft and doubled back on his tracks.

Johnny Clancy now felt quite proud of himself and of his success in saving Nora from Micky Donovan and his gang.

"There's no denyin' 't was the darky girl that planned the scheme," he said to himself with perfect fairness, "but 't was *me* carried it out," and he whistled contentedly, as he hurried along.

He had no doubt that by this time Nora was safe on the way home, though he intended to go and see, not so much to make certain, as to talk over their experiences and, perhaps, to boast a little of the ease with which he had outrun the other boys.

There were yet many people on the streets. Most of them stood about in crowds, talking loudly and bragging of what they would do, but there were others that went hurrying along, skulking close to the walls, overweighted with great bundles as if they had found treasures and had taken more than they could carry. Johnny passed men and women with bales of expensive

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cloths or silks, others with household goods piled with awkward confusion; one man staggered by with a bed balanced on his bowed shoulders while a woman followed with the mattress, loaded with blankets and sheets built up into a sort of pyramid, on the top of which fluttered a dainty lace pillow-sham.

"Who would have thought there was so much stuff to steal?" commented Johnny to himself as he hurried along.

There were numerous vehicles on the streets and these were engaged in the same occupation. Hucksters' barrows, wagons, dump-carts, rickety and worn-out carriages on wobbly wheels, drawn by weak old horses that tugged painfully at their heavy loads of loot, while beside them trudged their drivers, armed with stout clubs and casting anxious glances right and left, ready to repel attack, for no man, rich or poor, was safe in New York that night if he had with him anything worth the taking.

"There's a fine job for the peelers," mused Johnny, but he looked in vain for any policemen.

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At Twenty-third Street Johnny decided he would stop at the Fifth Avenue Hotel to inquire if Nora had come there. It was on his way and it would do no harm to ask. But when he reached it he found it would not be so easy as he anticipated to get the information he wanted.

The front of the hotel presented a strange appearance, barricaded as it was with rough boards nailed together to protect the plate-glass in the windows on the lower floor. At the entrance several men armed with pistols and guns warned him off as he approached.¹

He paused on the opposite side of the street wondering what to do. Perhaps Nora was there and not at the Astor House, it being reasonable to suppose that the hotel managers might keep her rather than send her on while the city was in such a state. He determined to find out in

¹ The next day a platform, ten feet above the floor, was erected at the entrance of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, to give the soldiers protecting it, a position of vantage to fire from. Guests organized for defense and prepared to throw boiling water on the mob from the windows.—E. B. K.

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spite of the guards, and crossed the street deliberately.

"They won't shoot a lone lad," he said to himself, as he disregarded the warning shouts that greeted him. "I won't hurt ye," he called back. "'T is business I have with the hotel."

But, though the men stationed in front of the building did not shoot him, they would on no account let him inside. However, after repeated questions and much explanation, they assured him that no such child as he described Nora to be, had been that way for at least three hours. She could not have entered the hotel without being seen, and at length Johnny was forced to the conclusion that she had not stopped there.

For the first time he began to worry a little. Perhaps the plan had not worked out so successfully as he had anticipated. In a little while he had argued himself into a state of painful anxiety.

"That ring would make a mark of Miss Nora,"

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he told himself. "Why did n't I take it, or tell her to hide it? There 's plenty about here would do murder for such a shiner. And that darky—Sure 't is like as not she 's not honest. Oh, why did I ever leave Miss Nora?"

It was quite late when Johnny arrived at the Astor House. He was tired all over, but of this he thought little while he argued with the guards who stopped him in the same way as those at the Fifth Avenue Hotel had done.

"But I tell you," said Johnny at last, raising his voice in his exasperation, "I 've just got to see if she 's come in. Oh, Mr. Ryan! Ryan!" he shouted at the top of his lungs, naming the tall attendant who knew him.

Johnny's call had the desired effect for the huge doors opened a little and the big man appeared.

"Who 's calling?" he asked.

"'T is me, Johnny Clancy," answered the boy. "I 'm lookin' for Miss Nora. Tell me, is she back in the hotel, Mr. Ryan?"

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"Let the boy in," Ryan called down to the guards, and Johnny ran up the stair two steps at a time.

"Tell me, is she here?" he panted, as he slipped inside.

"Are you talking of Miss Nora O'Neil?" asked the doorman, and Johnny's heart sank for he knew that if she had come in the man must have known it.

"Who else could I mean?" he snapped out, too much concerned to think of the respect the magnificent door-man usually inspired.

"Am I understandin' ye to say," asked Ryan, "that Miss Nora is out?" He looked at Johnny with amazement and incredulity.

"Did ye not see her go this afternoon?" questioned the boy.

"No, I was off duty for an hour or two," the man replied.

"Well, she was out," cried Johnny. "I found her 'way up by the reservoir, with a crowd of micks around her, an'—"

But Ryan cut him short, and hurried him into

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the private office of Mr. Stetson,¹ the manager of the hotel.

“Ye ’ll excuse me, sir,” he burst out, “but this boy here says he saw Miss Nora O’Neil away up town and—and, nobody knows where she is now.”

Mr. Stetson had looked up from his desk at the entrance of Ryan with an angry frown on his face, but this at once gave place to a look of concern as he heard the explanation of the intrusion.

Without a word he rang a bell and even before he asked for Johnny’s story, he had sent a hall-boy to the O’Neils’ rooms.

It took but a minute or two for Johnny to tell the main facts of his tale, and soon it was established that no one in the hotel had seen Nora since early in the afternoon.

Mr. Stetson got to his feet, but shook his head perplexedly.

¹ Throughout the war Mr. Stetson kept open house for officers and men at the Astor House.

The hospital stewards were always free of his kitchens.

His younger son, who was an officer in the Northern Army, made a fine record.

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"What can I do?" he murmured to himself. "I have no one to send even if I knew where to send him. Such a state of affairs!"

At that moment a telegram was handed to him and as he opened it his face changed slightly.

"Mr. O'Neil will be here in two hours," he said. "He tells me to notify Miss Nora to expect him. My, oh my, the child must be found at once."

Mr. Stetson's first move was to have the telegraph operator call the Fifth Avenue Hotel to make certain that Nora had not taken refuge there. This being definitely determined he considered what next could be done.

The hopelessness of the situation was appalling. Where ought the search to begin?

Under ordinary circumstances he would have communicated with the police, but now they were gathered together at headquarters and only went out in large companies to save threatened property. Already they had more work than they could attend to on this, the first night of the great draft riots.

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Mr. Stetson next considered dispatching some of his own employees, but here again he was confronted with a difficulty. His hotel was full of guests who must be protected; and as if to emphasize this fact, a great shouting rose in the streets and several shots rang out.

In a moment the place was in a panic. Frightened people came running downstairs into the lobby, clamoring to know what was happening, the screams of the women adding to the general confusion. It was shortly ascertained that the Tribune building, across the City Hall Park opposite the hotel, was being attacked, and Mr. Stetson, fearful that his own property might be the next to attract the attention of the mob, for the time could spare no one to take up the search for Nora O'Neil.

But Johnny Clancy had only one thought as he stood forgotten in the confusion of the hotel lobby. "Where was Miss Nora?" He cared not at all if the hotel was smashed to bits. His interest centered in finding one little girl who had won his humble devotion.

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"An' she mendin' me coat with her own hands, an' feedin' me when I never needed it at all, an' doin' this and that out of the kindness of her heart. Oh, 't is terrible to think of her losted out in the city! I've got to find her," he ended with a catch in his throat.

At any rate he would wait no longer. If he could get no help he would go alone, which resolve taken he looked about him in dismay. Now that he was in, there seemed no way out, and he felt as if he had been trapped. The noise going on in Broadway showed only too plainly that escape in that direction was impossible, so he turned and made his way to the back of the building. A few worried and anxious employees paid no heed to him and he soon found himself in the kitchens on the lower floor, and through these he slipped out by a service entrance.

Once in Vesey Street he turned from the sound of the tumult and ran as hard as he could away from the scene of the disorder.

Soon he slowed down into a walk and began to consider what he should do next. There

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seemed no way to begin the search, except to return to the place where he had left the two girls. That was a starting-point at least.

"She'll be somewhere in the neighborhood. Sure I did n't trick 'em so fine as I thought I had," he reflected sorrowfully

But as Johnny contemplated the long walk back to the reservoir his heart misgave him. He was tired out, and it was going to take him an age to get to Fortieth Street. And even if he found Nora, how could he get her home? Instinctively he looked up, thinking of the Broadway stages, then he shook his head with a grim little laugh.

"'T would be a fool that would be expectin' anything to be runnin' this night," he thought. "They'd tear the stages up for firewood and steal the horses. And Miss Nora's not used to footin' it."

He had been making his way uptown as fast as his tired legs would let him but now he stopped short.

"William Kerrigan!" he said aloud. "Why

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did n't I think of him long ago?" and with that he turned on his heel and ran into a side street at the top of his speed.

CHAPTER VIII

IN A DARK HALLWAY

LITTLE Rosie Kerrigan climbed into her father's lap and, pushing aside the paper he was reading, fixed herself comfortably in his arms.

"Tell me about Mith Nora," she said, with a funny lisp.

"Sure, do ye never get tired of hearin' about her?" asked her father, pretending to be annoyed at the interruption. "No matter what I may be doin', you're up in my lap beggin' for stories about 'Mith Nora.' And when will I have a chance to read me paper, an' all about the war?"

"'T is a thilly old paper," commented Rosie. "It hath n't any pi'tures in it. Tell me about Mith Nora."

"Well, what shall I tell ye?" assented her father, with a laugh. "Ever since I've been

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drivin' for Mr. O'Neil, I've been tellin' ye the history of every day I've spent with his daughter. Ye know everything I do already."

"Tell me about the time she picked up the poor little boy and made you drive him through Central Park to hear the band, 'cause he wath tired," commanded Rosie.

"I've told ye that forty times if I've told it once," her father answered, "but I suppose ye'll not be satisfied till I tell it again, so here goes. Well, ye mind I was drivin' along Forty-second Street after—"

"'T was Forty-third Threet," Rosie corrected, with a positive jerk of her head.

"You're right it was," agreed her father. "Well, to go on,—” But again he was interrupted, this time by a violent knock on the door.

William looked anxious as he rose and went to answer it. He and his family lived over the stable rented by Mr. O'Neil. People coming to visit him rang the bell downstairs before entering, and William had thought that the outer door was locked.

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"Who's there?" he demanded, abruptly.

"'T is me, Johnny Clancy," came the answer.
"Let me in quick, William."

"Are ye alone?" demanded the coachman, wishing for the sake of his family to run no risks.

"To be sure," answered Johnny. "Hurry, do."

William opened the door and Johnny bolted in, a bedraggled and dripping figure.

"For the land's sake, lad, you're wringin' wet," exclaimed the coachman.

"Never mind that. 'T is only rain," panted Johnny. "'T is about Miss Nora I've come, and—"

"What about her?" demanded William, almost fiercely, for he saw by the boy's face that something was amiss.

"She's gone!" cried Johnny. "She's gone!"

"Gone?" echoed William in astonishment.
"Gone where?"

"Oh, if I only knew!" answered Johnny with a sob, shivering with cold, anxiety and hunger.

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William, realizing something of the boy's condition, pushed him into a chair.

"Sit there, now, and tell me all about it?" he said. "Waste no words that ye can help. I'm thinkin' time is precious."

"'T is that, with Mr. O'Neil comin' back to-night. If he finds Miss Nora gone he'll be wild," and forthwith Johnny plunged into his story.

William listened in silence, his face growing more stern as he heard the details. Unconsciously he put a strong arm around little Rosie as if to protect her.

"There's a lot more I can be tellin' ye on the way," Johnny ended breathlessly, "but me scheme was to have you drive me out there where I saw her last. 'T will save time, and I'll be glad of help, with the gangs that's on the streets this night. I'm hopin' the drivin' rain will keep 'em indoors a bit. But dear, dear, do ye think Miss Nora can be out in it?"

William was already getting into his coat.

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"We'll go as soon as I can harness a horse," he said. "Have you had aught to eat?"

"Not a bite since mornin'. I'm fair starvin', and that's a fact. But never mind," said Johnny.

"Rosie, run to your mommer and ask her to feed Johnny with whatever she has handy. I'll call when I'm ready," and as Rosie went out of one door her father went out of the other on the run.

Less than ten minutes later William, with Johnny beside him, was driving swiftly up Fifth Avenue toward the reservoir. William's set face was looking straight ahead, while Johnny told him all of the story over again from the beginning. Now and then the coachman would emit a growl of anger, but for the most part he kept silent.

The pelting rain had sent most of the people to seek shelter. Occasionally they would see a figure skulking along in the shadows but there were no vehicles to impede their progress and William urged the horse to top speed.

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"What I can't make out," he growled, "is what that French mam'selle was doin' to let the child out on a day like this?"

"You could ha' knocked me down with a feather, when I seen her up there—and all alone," answered Johnny, and for a moment they were silent.

"Do ye have any hope of findin' her where we're goin'?" asked William anxiously.

"To tell the truth, I have n't," answered Johnny, dismally, "but what's to do?"

"We'll find her if we search the whole night through," vowed William fervently. "Ye did right to come to me, Johnny. Poor little Miss Nora! Sure if anything has happened her—"

"Don't be puttin' tongue to any thoughts like that, William!" cried Johnny. "'T would be the awfulest thing! And she the tender-heart-edest little body in the world, with a care for every one but herself. Why, if it had n't been for that darky girl—bad cess to her—she'd a-been home now—but she would n't leave her. 'They might

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hurt the poor child,' says she, and now, who knows what 's happened to herself?"

"Ah, do be quiet," protested William, but there was a break in his voice that was not the result of anger.

At Forty-second Street he pulled up the horse to turn the corner, when with an exclamation of surprise, Johnny seized his arm.

"Stop! Stop!" he whispered, but before William could obey he jumped from the carriage and sprang upon a small figure that had halted to let them pass.

The struggle was very short and in a moment Johnny was on top of the prostrate boy.

"Tell me, Pat Dugan, where she is?" he demanded fiercely. "I know you've got her hid somewhere. 'T is small use to be lyin'."

This last was a shot in the dark, but he hoped to impress the lad with the idea that he had some knowledge of what had happened to Nora. His ruse succeeded.

"'T is Micky's mother's got her," answered

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the boy. "Leave me up. I ain't got nothin' to do with it."

"How did Mrs. Donovan get hold of her?" demanded Johnny, by no means reassured by this news.

"If you le' me up I 'll tell you," answered Pat. "Honest I will," and Johnny pulled the boy roughly to his feet.

"Now out with it," he said threateningly, still clutching Pat's shoulder in a firm grip.

"We chased the girl all over the West Side—" Pat began.

"I know all about that," Johnny interrupted.

"Well then," Pat went on, "when we was almost home we turned a corner and there, under a street lamp, was the very same girl with Mrs. Donovan. How she got there before us I don't know; but Micky's mother, seein' him, called him over, and we heard somethin' about di'monts and then they all went off together. A little later Micky came back and set us lookin' for the darky girl; but never a peep of her have we had.

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That's all I know of it, and I cross me heart 't is the truth."

The tale, as Pat told it, sounded plausible to Johnny, but it gave him little assurance of Nora's safety. He knew the Donovans, root and branch, and his heart sank as he thought that Nora was in their hands.

By this time William had turned the horse and had stopped beside them.

"We've got track of her," said Johnny, in answer to his hurried questions, but there was no note of elation in his voice.

After hearing all that Pat could tell, William was for driving to the Donovan tenement with all speed and forthwith demanding Miss Nora, but Johnny shook his head.

"You'd be but runnin' your head into a hornets' nest," he said thoughtfully; "you don't know that crowd. They'd beat ye up and throw you out in the gutter, as quick as look at ye. Particular' on a night like this when there is n't a peeler for miles around. No, if Mrs. Donovan's got her, we can't take her away as easy as that!

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One man and a boy would have no show there. 'T is some other way we 'll have to go about it."

William found no argument to combat this statement of Johnny's, and for a moment there was silence, each trying to hit upon some plan by which Nora could be rescued. At last Johnny spoke.

"The first thing we've got to do is to make sure she's there, is n't it?"

"Aye, that's the first thing," agreed William, "but how?"

"I'll do that," answered Johnny. "We'll drive down as near as we dare and I'll take a look at things, while you wait nearby with the horse. We'll keep Pat by us. It's a long tongue he has, and he might take a notion to tell Micky all he knows. Get in with ye," and he gave the captured boy a smart shove toward the carriage.

They were only a short distance from the tenement where the Donovans lived and in a few moments William stopped the horse at a corner about half a block from the place.

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The rioters had left few lights burning in this part of the city, but Johnny, who knew the streets well, would have been better pleased if there had been none. The rain still fell steadily and, in consequence, the usually noisy and densely populated thoroughfare was empty.

"Hold on to him, and wait till I get back," Johnny admonished William as he turned Pat over to him, and disappeared from view in the shadow of the buildings.

He knew every in and out of the tenement where the Donovans lived. There were three or four of them, standing side by side on that street, all exactly alike, and not long before Johnny himself had slept in a corner of a room in one of them, when he happened to have ten cents to pay for his place there, so he took his way confidently toward the house, determined, first of all, to find out whether Nora was being held a prisoner. He thought it quite possible that she had been kept only long enough to strip her of her valuables and then had been released. Once Micky's mother had found the ring she

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would be only too glad to be rid of the girl, in which case Nora might be wandering around the streets somewhere, wet and bewildered.

At the entrance to the Donovan tenement he stopped and looked about him. Then, on tiptoe, he slid into the hallway and made his way back to the door under the staircase. There was scarcely any light, for the pale blue flame of the gas-jet did not illuminate ten feet from its immediate neighborhood.

Stepping cautiously to the Donovans' door, he pressed his ear to it and listened. For a time there came to him only the gruff voices of two men, talking in so low a tone that he could not distinguish the words. Presently, however, there was the sound of a door slammed noisily, the grating of a key turning in a rusty lock, and then he heard Mrs. Donovan speaking angrily.

"The brat says she has n't got it and don't know where it is," she blurted out. "Oh, it's a lie, I know, and I'll have the truth if I have to starve it out of her."

Johnny's heart gave a bound of joy. Miss

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Nora was there and, further, he knew the exact location of the room in which she was held a prisoner.

" 'T is lucky those Donovans live on the ground floor," he said to himself. "I 'll have her out in no time." And he was about to go back through the hall, when a figure entered from the street and advanced rapidly toward him.

With a gasp of dismay Johnny shrank away from the door and pressed himself into the shadow of the staircase, for he had recognized Micky Donovan as the boy passed under the gas jet.

CHAPTER IX

"STOP THIEF!"

UNDER ordinary circumstances Nora was a brave little girl and not inclined to tears, but it was not surprising that, after all she had undergone that day, she should have broken down when she found herself a prisoner in Mrs. Donovan's back room. She cried for a time, mainly because she felt so helpless, but soon she dried her eyes and controlled her sobbing.

"I'm glad Daddy's away," she said to herself, "for he'd be fair crazy not knowin' where I was. 'T is a queer adventure entirely, but I guess 't will be all right. They can't eat me, and that's a fact!"

This last idea brought with it an explanation of a curious feeling she had been conscious of for some time.

"Why, I'm just hungry," she murmured with

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a smile. “I thought I had somethin’ awful the matter with me, but ’t is just empty I am. ’T is long past supper time, I ’m thinkin’. Oh my, I wish I was out of this.”

The sound of rain beating sharply against the window attracted her attention.

“I wonder if I could get out there?” she thought, and, rising, tiptoed across the floor.

She had little hope of escape and was not much surprised to find that there were stout iron bars on the outside.

“No supper that way,” she murmured. Now that the thought of food had entered her mind she could not forget how famished she felt.

“Faith, I believe I could eat a cow and an old one at that,” she said, half aloud, sighing dismally.

She turned from the window and had just re-seated herself on the floor, when the door was opened and Mrs. Donovan came in, closing it behind her.

“Well, are ye ready to tell where the ring is ye stole?” she demanded roughly.

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"I did not steal it," Nora denied angrily.
"'T was give' me by me father."

"'T is likely," sneered the woman, and in the dark Nora was more afraid of her than she was when she could see her. "Would ye have me believe ye 'd be let go round the streets with di'mon's like that? Don't think I'm to be took in be such talk. Either ye stole it or ye found it, but, whichever way it was, I mean to have it."

"I don't know where it is," Nora insisted, persisting in her determination not to let these people know that Bébée had the ring.

"I've told you twenty times I did n't have the ring," she added wearily, but Mrs. Donovan broke in harshly.

"I know ye have n't it, all right,—but ye know where it is, and until ye tell me, here ye 'll stay."

"Then in mercy's name," cried Nora, "give me something to eat for I'm sick with hunger."

"Where 's the ring?" demanded Mrs. Donovan.

"I tell you I don't know," answered Nora.

"Then we 'll see if bein' hungry will help your poor memory; for I warn ye, ye 'll get neither

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meat nor drink till ye tell!” And with that the woman went out, slamming the door angrily and locking it behind her.

“The brat says she has n’t got it,” Nora heard her say through the closed door, and then she sighed despairingly, “’T is a pretty fix I ’m in,” and sank back on the floor which seemed to grow colder and harder every minute.

Nora, when she tried, could catch some of the conversation that went on in the next room, but she had paid little heed to it heretofore. Now, however, as she sat there, she heard the outer door shut and the voice of Micky Donovan speaking.

“We ’ve looked high and low for the colored girl, and not a sign of her can we see.”

“’T is small use ye are,” his mother growled. “Here ye ’ve let a fortune slip through your fingers.”

“’T was Johnny Clancy spoiled me plans,” grunted Micky. “Just wait till I catch him! As for the ring, she ’d never trust it to Johnny or a stray darky, and if the other one had stole

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it from her she'd say so. So this girl's got it or has hid it, be sure of that."

"Well," said his mother, philosophically, "if that's so we'll have it yet. Her empty stomach is on our side and will be a grand persuader. We'll leave it to coax her for an hour or two."

Nora, listening to this conversation, rejoiced that Bébée had escaped and with her the ring. At least what she was suffering was not for nothing, but oh dear, she was hungry! Then, suddenly, it occurred to her that if they could n't find Bébée, if they had already searched for her without success, there was no further need of her keeping from Mrs. Donovan the fact that the strange child had the ring. She went over the matter in her own mind, viewing it from every angle and then, the pangs of hunger urging her on, she rose to her feet and walked to the door.

She had raised her hand to knock when the movement was arrested by a gentle tapping on the window-pane that brought her around facing it with a feeling of fright. She did n't know

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what it might be, but awaited developments breathlessly.

Again came the tapping and Nora, taking courage, tiptoed over and peered out. Below her she saw the head and shoulders of a boy with his hand raised to knock again. Something familiar in the figure reassured her and she clutched at the sash and softly raised it.

"Miss Nora! Miss Nora!" came the whispered call of Johnny Clancy, and her heart bounded with joy as she recognized his voice.

"I'm here, Johnny," she murmured, putting her face close to the bars.

"Are ye all right?" came the anxious question.

"No, I'm near starved," she returned. "But I'm not hurt any. Have ye come to take me away?"

"If I can," he answered; "I thought I as good as had ye; but I forgot these bars, bad luck to 'em. Don't be making a noise till I see what I can do."

The head and shoulders disappeared from Nora's view and she stood silent and attentive,

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listening to the low murmur of voices in the next room and the dripping of the rain outside.

“’T is wet to the skin, that poor boy will be,” she thought as she waited for Johnny to appear again.

Presently he came into view out of the shadows.

“Miss Nora,” he called, in subdued tones.

“Yes, Johnny,” she answered.

“’T is a awkward business,” he told her. “The window ’s a good six foot from the ground, but I ’ve got a box with a barrel on it, though they ’re none too steady. The worst is them iron bars. I ’m hopin’ they ’re rusted enough to let me break one of them away so that you can squeeze through, but I ’m none too sure. Here goes for a try. I ’ve found a bit of steel rod to pry with, though I ’m fearful of the noise I may be makin’.”

Johnny wedged his rod between two of the bars with great care then, cautiously, he threw his weight against it; but his position on the top of the barrel was a precarious one, his pedestal

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shook perilously when he exerted his strength. Moreover the bar seemed as solid as when it had first been put in. The rust which Johnny had counted upon had not yet done its work.

“It ’s pretty strong, Miss Nora,” he whispered disconsolately, wondering the while what he could do.

Nora, convinced that Johnny’s arrival meant her escape, grasped one of the bars. It was quite loose, turning in her hand.

“Can’t ye pry at this one?” she asked in an undertone. “It ’s almost out now.”

Johnny seized it and found that he could shake it and lift it a little way in the holes drilled in the bricks at its top and bottom, but that was all. Again he puzzled over the problem and was almost ready to despair, when it flashed over him that if he could pry away the brick into which the base of the bar was inserted he could slide it out without any noise.

He felt in the darkness and discovered that the mortar between the bricks was crumbling and old. At once he set to work with his rod and a

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few minutes later the brick was loose and the bar out.

Nora was impatient to be off at once, but Johnny cautioned her to wait.

“ ’T is powerful careful you ’ll have to be, Miss Nora, gettin’ onto that barrel. I misdoubt ye ’ll have trouble. Wait till I ’m down to steady it. If they hear us in there we ’re done for.”

He stepped down and, after setting the barrel and the box as near to the wall as possible, signaled for her to come.

Nora climbed eagerly into the window, but there she halted in dismay. Her fashionable crinoline had not been planned for such adventures and she could not possibly squeeze it between the bars. But she faltered only for a moment. Back she went into the room and slipped it off.

“ ’T is ashamed I ’ll be to be seen in the Astor House all slimpsy like this,” she thought, “but there ’s no help for it,” and the next instant she was again on the sill.

She had no trouble now in getting to the top

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of the barrel and her escape seemed assured; but, as she attempted to descend to the ground, her skirt, lengthened by the removal of the crinoline, caught on a nail and jerked her off her feet.

Uttering an involuntary cry of surprise and dismay, as the box and barrel collapsed, Nora fell with a clatter that could be heard a block away.

Johnny wasted no time in useless questions. He grabbed Nora and pulled her up unceremoniously, then holding her by the arm he dragged her to an opening in the fence. Into the next yard he hurried her and through the hallway of the adjoining tenement.

“We must run for it, Miss Nora,” he cried, the clamor and shouts behind them, having shown only too plainly that her escape had been discovered. “You ’re not hurted?”

“No, no,” answered Nora, “only you should n’t say ‘hurted.’ ”

“Never mind that now,” panted Johnny, “come on!” And he led her out of the house and into the street.

Hardly were they turned toward safety than

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they heard the sound of rapid running, and a man shouted "Stop thief!" at the top of his lungs.

Almost as if by magic the doors and windows of the houses opened and a babel of voices and calls came forth.

Johnny's heart sank, for, though they had a start he was fearful lest some one, hearing the cry, should come out ahead and bar their progress.

"Stop thief!" he yelled, lustily, as a man ran toward them. "Toward Lexin'ton," he called to the man. "Hurry on! Into the middle of the street, Miss Nora," he said, pulling her off the pavement, "and run for your life. 'T is but half a block, and we'll find William with a carriage at the corner."

Nora did not reply, but, summoning all her strength, she put forth her best speed and raced along beside the boy.

"Stop thief!" continued the cry behind them, and they could hear footsteps coming closer till even the panting breath of their pursuers was audible. But their goal was in sight. The whole

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race was but fifty yards or so, and William, hearing the shouts, had held himself in readiness for anything that might happen, not sure how he could be of the most service. Seeing the two small forms leading, he knew what was going forward and had a hand outstretched to help the gasping Nora. In he dragged her while Johnny jumped for the step.

With a rush the whole street seemed to be upon the carriage. Pat took this opportunity to dive out of the far side, while the excited horse sprang forward just in time to avoid Micky Donovan, who, with a cry of wrath, leaped for its head, as William snapped his whip and they were away like the wind.

Behind them an angry and baffled woman upbraided her son, blaming him for all that had happened.

“Put this coat around ye, Miss Nora,” cried Johnny, happy and excited. “Ye’ll be home in no time now and nothin’ worse than a teared dress,” and he settled himself at her feet in the bottom of the buggy.

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“Oh, Johnny,” sighed Nora wearily, as she leaned back, “how many times have I told you not to say ‘teared,’ ” and then she closed her eyes, too tired to hold them open while the good horse sped along the deserted street toward the Astor House.

CHAPTER X

NORA ASKS FOR A PRESENT

IT was not until the rain had fallen for some time in a steady soaking stream that the rioters in the City Hall Park melted away. Only then could Mr. Stetson of the Astor House breathe a little easier and the guards relax somewhat of their vigilance. At last even the more timorous guests took heart and returned to their rooms and, except for the barricaded windows on the first floor, the affairs of the hotel assumed a fairly normal aspect.

It was then that the hotel manager, relieved of anxiety for all of his charges, began to remember individual cases needing attention, and among these the disappearance of Nora O'Neil was the most pressing.

Like all who knew Nora, Mr. Stetson was de-

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voted to the child. Her warm-hearted interest in any one or any thing in trouble or want, her frank simplicity that no luxury could spoil, her funny, Irish talk, with its quaint twisting of sentences, and her grown-up views on the life around her—all these things endeared Nora to every one who came in contact with her.

Moreover, Mr. O'Neil was held in great respect because of his unostentatious charities, his more than liberal contributions to the many relief organizations, and, most of all, his untiring efforts in the work of providing the Northern Army with all that was necessary to keep the soldiers in fighting trim.

The devotion of Nora and her father to each other was known to Mr. Stetson perhaps better than to any one else in the world, although every one about the hotel could have no doubt of their intense joy in being together. So he fully realized the shock it would be to Mr. O'Neil to return and find Nora lost in the city on such a night of confusion and rioting as was then going on. He dreaded the thought of her father's

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distress and straightway set about doing what he could to effect the little girl's return.

His first inquiry was for Johnny Clancy who had brought the news; and, of course, he did n't find him. Then he sent a message to police headquarters telling of the facts in the case and received the discouraging word that scores of people had been reported missing and there was little the authorities could do under the existing circumstances. Another telegraphic communication with the Fifth Avenue Hotel brought the same reply as the previous one. Nothing had been heard of a child answering Nora's description.

The case called for a regiment at least to go out and search the town in all directions, for Nora might be anywhere; but it was impossible to spare many men from the hotel. Mr. Stetson was quite at his wit's end to know what to do, when, after a slight commotion at the door, Mr. O'Neil himself came limping into the lobby.

"Sure, is it a state of siege ye 're in?" he asked genially. "Ye 've no need to worry. Gineral

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Grant 's on our side. But 't is a fine time ye 're havin' in this town. Ye should have seen the bag of bones that brought me up from the ferry. Not a cab in sight when I got across the river, and it took me half an hour's time, and enough dollars to buy the outfit, before I could get anything to carry me here at all. 'T is a jolly little riot they tell me ye 've been havin'."

With a broad smile on his good-humored face, Mr. O'Neil made for the stairway leading to his room.

There was no response to this kindly chaff of his and, a little puzzled, he looked at those about him, who, as soon as his eye caught theirs, turned away.

"What 's wrong with ye all?" he asked. "Ye can't be scared at the doin's of a lot of ragamuffins? Faith, it must be awful, if 't is as bad as ye look!" and he laughed aloud.

At that moment Mr. Stetson hurried to meet him.

"I want to see you in my office," he said, rather

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brusquely, for the news he had to tell upset him greatly.

"Not to-night," was the answer. "You've all the news I have an' 't is all good news. 'T is in my mind that Gettysburg and Vicksburg are the turnin' points of the war. And 't is the fine little man Grant is! Sure the big wigs got tired waitin' for the city to fall an' sent the adjutant-gineral himself to remove him forninst Vicksburg. Says Grant, 'Give me twinty-four hours and I'll give you Vicksburg!' And he did!"

Mr. O'Neil took a step up but turned again. "Some that's jealous of him told Lincoln he was naught but a drunkard. But old Abe was n't born yesterday. Sez he, anxious-like, 'Gintlemen, can you find out what brand o' whiskey he drinks? I'm thinkin' it would be good to send some of it to all me other ginerals.' Well," he went on, eyeing them keenly for a moment, "if there's not a laugh to be got out of you, I've an engagement with a young lady upstairs who is lookin' for me this minute, God bless her. I'll

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not be denyin' to ye that I'm impatient to have her arms around me neck. Sure you know how I'm feelin', after bein' this long away from Nora."

Already Mr. O'Neil had climbed a half dozen steps, and, under the circumstances, his eagerness to go to see his daughter wrung Mr. Stetson's heart.

"It's about Nora that I want to see you," he insisted, following Mr. O'Neil up the stairs.

Mr. O'Neil noted the seriousness of the other's face and stopped short.

"What about her?" he demanded in a changed voice, as if he felt the coming of bad news.

"She's not upstairs, Mr. O'Neil," said Mr. Stetson gravely; "she—"

Mr. O'Neil's face went chalky white and he clutched the rail of the stairway.

"'T is ill she is? Is that it? Have ye taken her to a hospital? What is it, man?" he cried in a loud voice, lurching toward Mr. Stetson.

"No, it is neither of those things," answered the manager. "She went out this afternoon

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alone and has not come back yet. We don't know where she is."

Mr. O'Neil stared at the speaker as if he could not believe his ears, while those about the lobby of the hotel stood silent, scarcely breathing, so tense was the scene they looked at.

"You say she was alone?" asked Mr. O'Neil in a husky voice, limping down the stair. "Alone? Why was that? Where was the governess? Where was William Kerrigan? Do they all leave her alone when I go away? Oh, I can't believe it. 'T is some trick you're playin', Mr. Stetson." He looked keenly at the man before him and then burst out into a loud, heart-broken cry of pain. "Tell me 't is just a trick you're playin' me and that the child is upstairs this minute?"

"No, no, Mr. O'Neil," Mr. Stetson hastened to say. "I could n't play a trick like that. Little Nora is gone. How she happened to be alone I know no more than you. The first word we had of her being out was from that newsboy, Johnny Clancy, whom she takes such an interest

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in. He told us of seeing her uptown, but he came here expecting she would have returned."

"Where is *he*?" asked Mr. O'Neil, who by a strong effort had controlled himself and was now making ready for action, though his face seemed to have aged many years since he had come into the hotel. "Where is the boy?"

"He has disappeared," answered Mr. Stetson. "We had a disturbance out in the park here and expected to be attacked at any moment. While our attention was attracted in that direction the boy went away somewhere. No one seems to know what became of him."

"Well, what have you done?" demanded Mr. O'Neil. "Have the police been notified?"

"The police are helpless, Mr. O'Neil," replied Mr. Stetson. "The city is in the hands of the mob and will be until troops are sent here. Houses have been burned, stores looted, destruction and crime have the upper hand."

"And my Nora is out in it!" The words came in a great cry of anguish from the distracted father.

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At that moment a loud banging brought all eyes to the entrance of the hotel. Ryan fumbled with the fastenings, then opening the door a crack peered into the street. An instant later he gave a shout and flung it wide.

There on the threshold was Nora!

For a moment she stood blinking in the sudden glare of the brilliantly lighted lobby, a bedraggled little figure with a shy, embarrassed smile upon her lips.

"Nonie! Nonie!" came a cry from Mr. O'Neil as he limped forward, and the child with a look of glad surprise ran into his arms.

"Why, 't is Daddy!" she exclaimed as she hugged him. "Poor Daddy! Did ye think I was losted? Sure ye must have grieved, and I thought ye 'd never know till it was all over."

She talked softly, patting her father and trying to soothe him, while he held her close, his heart too full to speak.

"'T is queer how things turn out," she went on. "The times I 've been wantin' ye to come and never a sight of ye, and to-day, the only time in

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me life I was ever glad ye were away, in ye pop to be worried. Poor Daddy! But don't fret now. I 'm here safe and sound and as hungry as—as—an elephant, I 'm thinkin'."

"I 'll fix that for you!" exclaimed Mr. Stetson, glad to relieve the tension. "I 'll have supper sent up to your rooms at once," and he gave the necessary orders.

"Send enough for Johnny Clancy, too," she called as she and her father started up the stairs. "'T is him we have to thank that I 'm here at all. Where is the boy?"

Johnny stepped forward from the entrance where he had been confiding to an admiring audience something of the night's adventures.

"Come up with us," she said to him, and Johnny followed obediently.

The sudden change from despair to joy at her return had for the time being robbed Mr. O'Neil of any sensation except that of great thankfulness that his darling was restored to him uninjured. Until they were in their rooms he had not realized that she was soaked with rain.

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"Oh, me dear, me dear," he murmured as he pressed her close. "It seemed as if me heart jumped into me throat and choked me when they told me ye was lost. But upon me word ye're soppin' wet. Hurry into some dry clothes or ye'll catch your death o' cold."

"'T is Johnny needs lookin' after more than me," she answered. "And it's him ye have to thank for bringin' your Nonie back to you. Get him some of your clothes, Daddy, while I'm gone. Then we'll have supper together. I hope they send a lot, for never was I so hungry in all me life," and she ran off, leaving Mr. O'Neil regarding Johnny, who smiled sheepishly.

"Sure, I'm all right, sir," he said. "Don't bother about me, I'll be dry in a minute." But water trickling out of his shoes belied this assurance.

Mr. O'Neil put his hand on the boy's shoulder and found his coat wet through.

"Dear land, lad, but you're soppin'. We must have a new outfit for ye entirely!" he exclaimed, and started for the bell-rope with the intention of

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sending a boy to buy Johnny all he needed. "I forgot," he said and stopped. "'T will be impossible to buy anything to-night," he went on, then chuckled softly to himself. "Never mind. Come with me. My clothes will be a fine easy fit for ye, but they'll be better than wet ones," and he led the protesting Johnny into his own room and was soon busy dressing him as well as he could.

It was a funny supper they had, sitting around the table that was pushed up to the sofa, on which Nora half lay and half sat. Opposite her was Johnny Clancy, arrayed in a dressing-wrapper of Mr. O'Neil's, below which his feet showed resplendent, clad in socks many sizes too big for him and gay beaded slippers, so large that they would not stay on. Mr. O'Neil was between them, intent upon the tale they told and only putting in questions when all was not plain to him. As the story progressed he saw how serious Nora's position had been, especially after she had fallen into the clutches of Mrs. Donovan, and he murmured a prayer of thankfulness for her escape and a

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blessing on the boy who had so bravely rescued her.

"And to think," exclaimed Nora, "that we was both listening to Mrs. Donovan! You at one door and me—I mean, I, at the other."

"Yes, but 't was when Micky came in that me heart went into me boots," cried Johnny. "I thought fer sure he 'd see me, and I pressed back into the dark under that stairs just tremblin' with fear. He could have put out his hand an' touched me, but once he was inside the room I knew I was safe and I cut into the next house and through the fence the same way we came—Golly, but that 's a good puddin'!"

"I 'm that sorry about the ring," Nora said, turning to her father. "But I 'm sure we 'll get it when we find Bébée."

"Don't be frettin' about it," said Mr. O'Neil, reaching out and patting her hand. "There's loads of rings where that came from, Nonie darlin'. So long as you 're not hurted there's nothing matters."

"Oh, but we 'll have it back," said Nora with

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assurance. "To-morrow we must hunt for Bébée."

"Ye 'll never find her," said Johnny Clancy, positively. "It 's my belief she stole the ring."

"Shame on ye, Johnny Clancy, to say such a thing!" cried Nora. "To accuse a poor child like that of stealin'."

"But 't is only natural, Miss Nora," Johnny insisted. "What would an ignorant moke think of takin' a ring? 'T is natural she 'd take it."

"I 'll not believe it," declared Nora with equal seriousness, and then, with a shade of anxiety in her voice, "you 're sure she 's a darky girl, Johnny?"

"Aye, there 's no doubt of that," replied the boy. "Did n't she sneak out when they was burnin' the Colored Orphant 'Sylum? Is n't her mammy as black as coal? Sure she 's a darky, though she 's one of them light complected ones, I 'll allow."

"Well, I hope so," said Nora, a little absently, almost as if speaking to herself.

"Now why do ye be sayin' that?" demanded

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her father with a look of surprise. "It makes no differ to you."

"Oh, does n't it, Daddy?" exclaimed Nora, with a shy little laugh at her father. "Oh, does n't it? Faith, it makes a heap of difference."

"Well, it 's time to go to bed anyway," said Mr. O'Neil, getting up and ringing the bell to arrange for a room for Johnny.

A little later he escorted the boy to it and saw that he had everything he needed.

Johnny was a little awestruck at such magnificence, but he was too tired to protest at anything that night.

Before he went out Mr. O'Neil looked down at the lad safely tucked up in the bed. He stood there without speaking for what seemed a long time; then he broke the silence in a voice that showed how deeply he felt what he said.

"I won't insult ye, Johnny Clancy, by offerin' ye money for doin' what ye did this day for me daughter; but ye 'll not lack for a friend, and a good one, as long as Tim O'Neil is in the land of the livin'. There 's a plan goin' round in me

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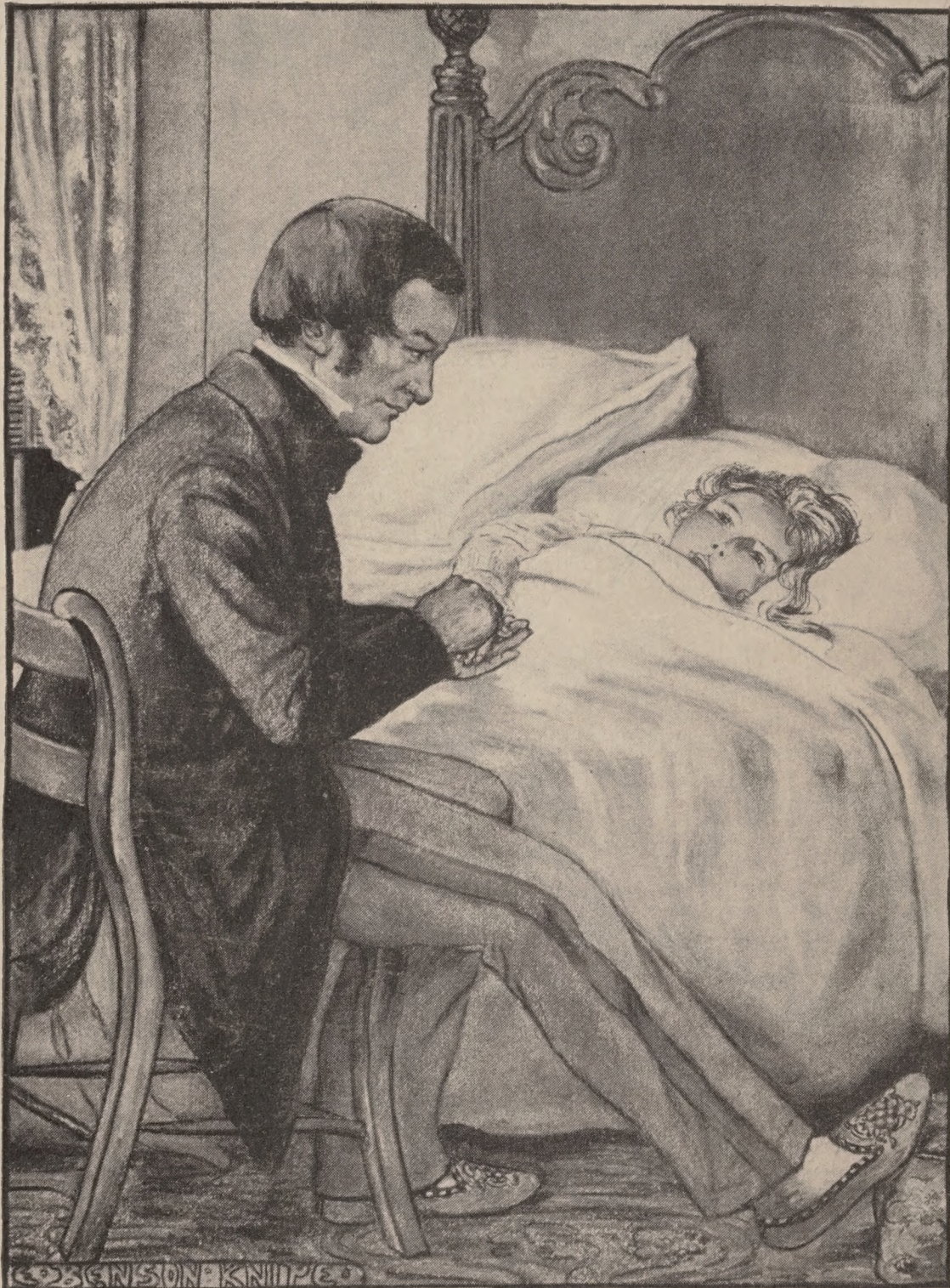
head—but we 'll talk about that some other time. Meanwhile I thank ye with all me heart. There 's no words to tell what ye did for me, but there 's me hand."

Johnny seized the broad, thick palm and shook it vigorously.

"There ain't no call to be doin' anything for me, Mr. O'Neil," he said. "Sure I 'm owin' that and more to Miss Nora, for the friend she 's been to me this long time. Why, if it had n't been for her I 'd a-been bummin' round like that gang o' Micky's, doin' no good to meself, nor nobody else, and headin' straight for jail. And then, too, Mr. O'Neil, anybody that knowed her and her kindness, and the cheerful way she do be findin' fault, correctin' this and that till you 're fair 'mazed tryin' to remember, sure any one would do what I done; and I 'm not lookin' fer thanks at all, at all."

" 'T is a brave lad ye are, and good night to ye," with which the gentleman left him.

When Mr. O'Neil reëntered his own rooms, Nora was in bed, and he sat down in a chair at



“I’m wanting just one little slave”

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her side, taking a hand that lay outside the covers.

"Have ye found out aught about the little lady Lady Castleton's lookin' for?" asked Nora.

"Not a word as yet," answered Mr. O'Neil. "I misdoubt 't will take a long time with this cruel war goin' on, but I've set men on the track and I'm hopin' we'll hear news of her soon."

For a while they sat in silence. Mr. O'Neil looking down at Nora's closed eyes was sure she was asleep, but suddenly they opened drowsily.

"Daddy?"

"Yes, Nonie dear."

"Would ye be pleasin' me more than I can tell ye?"

"Oh, me darlin', if there's anything you're wishful of, you've only to tell me and 't is yours."

"There's somethin' I've been longin' for, and I never knew what it was," murmured Nora.

"'T is a fine big present I'm askin'."

"You've only to tell me, Nonie," said her father, leaning half across the bed.

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“’T is that I ’m wantin’ just—one—little—slave,” came the half-whispered answer, and Nora dropped off into a sound sleep.

Mr. O’Neil looked at her for a long time with an expression of blank amazement on his face and presently tiptoed out of the room.

CHAPTER XI

A TEA-PARTY

MR. O'NEIL awoke at his usual time the next morning and, finding that Nora still slept soundly, he went across the hall to see how Johnny Clancy fared.

That young man was dressed in his own clothes and sitting, not too comfortably on the edge of a chair, in the splendid room, awaiting a summons.

"Did ye sleep?" asked Mr. O'Neil kindly, seating himself and regarding Johnny with interest.

"Sure, like a top," answered Johnny, "though 't is too grand a place for the likes of me. I never knew there was such soft beds."

Mr. O'Neil nodded absently.

"I 've been thinkin' about you," he said, slowly and thoughtfully; "I 've made up me mind what 's the best thing I can do for ye. I 'm goin' to see to

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your education and give ye the finest that money can buy."

Johnny's face fell.

"Does that mean goin' to school?" he asked in a rather dismal tone.

"Aye, it does, and I see ye don't like the notion," Mr. O'Neil replied. "Well, when I was your age I did n't like school neither. 'T was only when I grew up, and did n't have much education to speak of, that I found out what I'd missed and could never get. If it had n't been for the kindest lady that ever lived I would n't have had any learnin' at all. I would n't have been able to so much as read an' write. Sure, I was no better off than you. A poor boy, without mother or father, runnin' the streets and hatin' school like poison."

"I'd rather be sellin' papers," said Johnny wistfully, looking out of the window.

"Aye, 't is likely. Sure I don't expect you, a boy, to be thinkin' like me, a man," said Mr. O'Neil. "'T would n't be natural. 'T was the same with me and Miss Eileen. 'To school ye

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go, Tim O'Neil,' was her very words, and I went. I could do no less, seein' that she 'd been feedin' me when I was hungry and fixin' me clothes and motherin' me, so to speak."

"Sure, she must have been like Miss Nora," exclaimed Johnny, brightening.

"'T was after her I named the child," said Mr. O'Neil in a reminiscent tone.

"And did she order ye to do this and that whether ye liked it or no?" questioned Johnny enthusiastically.

"She did that," answered Mr. O'Neil. "And scold! My, my, how quick she was with her tongue and what a fiery bit of a temper she had. Many's the round box on the ear she gave me, bless her kind heart."

Mr. O'Neil's thoughts went back over the past, and Johnny sat looking out of the window without speaking.

"Is it your intintion to tell Miss Nora about sendin' me to school?" he asked presently.

"Sure," replied Mr. O'Neil, with a glance of surprise at the boy.

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"Then 't will be useless to be arguin'," said Johnny resignedly. "She's been at me about school this long time, and now I'll be havin' no excuse to keep out. She's not one to be put off, sir."

"That's true enough," assented Mr. O'Neil gravely, "and we'll call it settled. When things are all right again in the city here I'll be askin' some of me acquaintances what is the best school for ye, and other things I don't know meself. And, Johnny," he ended impressively, "I hope ye'll take advantage of it."

"Oh, if I must go, I'll not have the money wasted," the boy told him earnestly. "'T will be hard, bein' kep' indoors all day; but I'll get what I can out of it. I'll promise ye that, Mr. O'Neil."

"'T is me wish to give ye the best thing in me power," said Mr. O'Neil. "Ye deserve all of that. And now let's have something to eat."

Out of consideration for Johnny, Mr. O'Neil had ordered their breakfast served in their own parlor, and by the time the table was ready Nora appeared, as if she had never had the exciting

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experiences of the previous day. She flew to her father and flung her arms about him joyfully.

"Oh, Daddy, 't is good to have you home!" she exclaimed, then to Johnny Clancy, "Good mornin', Johnny. I see your coat needs mendin' again."

"Sure, ye need n't be mindin' his coat," said Mr. O'Neil with a laugh. "Just as soon as the stores are ready to do business we 'll have a new outfit for the boy. Tell me, has that French mam'selle of yours come in yet? 'T is in me mind to tell her what I think of her for lettin' you go off alone like that."

"Indeed ye 'll do nothin' of the kind," returned Nora positively. "'T was not her fault in the least. I said she might go home, thinkin' to go to the Fifth Avenue Hotel with William, as I told you, and then I changed me mind. 'T is not her fault at all, at all, and I 'll not have her scolded."

Mr. O'Neil and Johnny exchanged glances and the latter turned away to hide a smile.

"But sure some one should be scolded for yes-

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terday's work," Mr. O'Neil insisted. "Can ye say nobody was at fault for your going through what ye did?"

"No,—there's one," acknowledged Nora, demurely.

"Give me the name and I'll see that it does n't happen again," said Mr. O'Neil grimly.

"Sure, her name is Nora," replied that pert young person with a smile. "Sometimes her father calls her 'Nonie.' Will ye be scoldin' her? She's just tremblin' with fear."

"The fault is all with that colored girl ye stopped with," Johnny declared. "Ye had no call to do it, and, had ye left her, I'd have got ye safe home and no trouble at all."

"And would ye have had me give up the child to those bad boys, Johnny Clancy?" demanded Nora with some heat.

"Sure nothing would have happened her," he answered. "Micky wanted the ring and would n't have bothered her again; but now the darky girl has it, and there's an end to it."

"Ah now, don't be sayin' that," Nora replied

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pleadingly. "I've been expectin' you'd be out lookin' for her the minute you finished your breakfast."

"Me lookin' for a darky, is it?" cried Johnny, laying down his knife and fork, and regarding Nora with astonishment. "*Me* lookin'—sure, I've other things to do!"

"I'm disappointed in you, Johnny Clancy," said Nora. "I thought you'd be wantin' to find the beautiful ring me father gave me, and I see ye don't care at all that I've lost it."

"Sure I *do* want to find the ring," returned Johnny, indignantly.

"And ye can't find that without findin' Bébée," retorted Nora.

"Indeed, and that's so," agreed the boy, and Mr. O'Neil looked at him and winked meaningly. "I'll hand her over to the police," added Johnny, irritated by the wink.

"You'll bring her here," said Nora. "I'd not be trustin' the police with that fine ring."

And so the matter was settled and shortly Johnny went off to hunt for Bébée.

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"But mind," were his last words, as he went out of the door of the parlor, "'t is the ring I'm lookin' for, not the darky girl. I would n't be tryin' to find *her* if I knew where she was."

For Nora and her father the day passed quietly enough, though they were forced to stay indoors on account of the confusion that existed in the city. The looting and riots were unabated, and those who had anything to lose stayed at home.

Although she was extremely happy to have her father with her, it was plain to Mr. O'Neil that Nora had half her mind upon Johnny Clancy and his success in finding the missing child and, as the afternoon drew to a close without any sign of the boy, she began to worry.

"Don't be frettin' over Johnny Clancy, dear," said her father. "He's a boy and can take care of himself, come what may."

"'T is Bébée I'm thinkin' of," answered Nora, going to the window and looking out. "'T is awful for a child like that to be alone in the street at such a time."

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"Sure no one will molest a little colored girl," said Mr. O'Neil.

"'T is because of her color they were stonin' her yesterday," insisted Nora. "'T is to free the slaves, they say, that they have to fight, so if they kill all the negroes there won't be any more war."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. O'Neil angrily. "'T is to save the Union this war is bein' fought. Do you think that for anything less our soldiers would have suffered what they have at Fort Sumter an' Bull Run an' Fredericksburg, an' Chancellorsville? To be sure we fought a kind of a draw at Antietam, an' we won at Shiloh, an' New Orleans, an' other places I could mention; but, between the good soldiers in front of 'em and the meddlin' politicians behind 'em, our armies has had a hard time of it. Indeed 't is more than a rumor that Ginerel Grant cut the telegraph lines back of him to prevint his gettin' any new orders from Washington till Vicksburg had fallen. Sure these street orators gabbin' at the corners but make trouble with their talk. Most of 'em is paid be

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the South to stir up our people against the negroes, and to blame all the war on them. There's plenty of Southern agitators in the town, and mark me words, these riots may be laid to their door."

"I've no manner of doubt you're right, Daddy," said Nora, rather indifferently, "but I do wish Johnny Clancy would not be so long findin' the child."

Meanwhile Johnny was dodging about the streets in the thick of the riot. He was among the turbulent throng that trod on the heels of two companies of veteran troops up Broadway, hooting and groaning at them. He looked curiously at the cavalry encamped in Madison Square, which had been brought there to protect the Fifth Avenue Hotel. He ran to fires, he followed the idle crowds hither and yon, and narrowly escaped injury when it became necessary to break up some of the most violent bands by the free use of cannister; but he always kept an eye open for Bébée. Nor did he forget Micky Donovan and his gang. He had no desire to fall

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into their hands just yet, so he made himself inconspicuous by sticking close to the crowd, hoping that good luck might put him in the way of the missing child.

He was lingering outside the Fifth Avenue Hotel, wishing, boy-like, that something exciting would happen, when a small, bedraggled figure crept up to the entrance and spoke to a man standing on the steps. After a moment she turned dejectedly away and walked slowly and uncertainly toward the Park.

Johnny stared at the unkempt little girl and then darted across the street after her. In a moment he had laid a hand on her arm.

The child with a frightened glance over her shoulder leaped to one side and started to run away.

"Oh, no, ye don't!" cried Johnny, grasping her tightly.

"Oh!" exclaimed Bébée, her face lighting up as she recognized him. "I am glad—for now you will tell me where to find my mammy."

"Save us, but you're the cool one!" said Johnny

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with admiration. "First ye try to run from me, and then ye make a show of being glad to see me. Faith, you 're smart and no mistake, but I 'm wantin' to see how you 'll act when ye see Miss Nora."

"Is she safe?" inquired Bébée.

"Safe as a bank," answered Johnny.

"Oh, I 'm so glad." Bébée's relief was evident. "I asked for her at the big hotel, where you said she was to go, and they had not seen her. I 'm very happy if she's safe. Now where is my mammy? You promised to take me to her."

For a moment Johnny was embarrassed. He had little doubt that the colored woman had been severely dealt with by the mob. She might even be dead, but he had not the heart to tell her child so. Miss Nora would be better able to break it to her.

"All right," he said rather gruffly, "come along, I 'll take you to her."

He salved his conscience by saying to himself that "her" meant Miss Nora, and if the child

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thought he was talking of her "Mommer" it was not his fault.

"Is—is it very far?" asked Bébée, and added in a weak voice, "I 'm so tired."

Johnny eyed her suspiciously. Was she trying to make him feel sure of her while she waited for an opportunity to run?

"It 's quite a ways from here," he answered, "and there ain't no cars goin'," but as he spoke, a stage came rattling along under a strong guard and he pulled her in its direction. "Come, we 'll go in that!" but the girl held back obstinately.

"I have no money to pay for riding," she said.

"I 'll pay," returned Johnny, but this had no effect on Bébée.

"I don't know whether Mammy could pay you back," she answered, with a proud toss of her head. "I 'd rather walk, thank you," and by that time the stage had passed out of their reach.

Johnny stopped and regarded her slyly.

"You 're thinkin' you 'd have less chance to get away from me in the stage," he said with a stern look at the child, "but don't get that notion into

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your head. I'll have me eye on ye, never fear."

Bébée looked at him in surprise.

"I'll not run away from you," she told him a little wearily.

"Sure I know you won't," said Johnny, with exaggerated sarcasm, and the two started to make their way to the Astor House.

It was nearly dark when they reached their destination and Johnny made straight for the O'Neil parlor, where after knocking and receiving permission to enter, he opened the door and thrust Bébée in ahead of him.

"Here she is!" he exclaimed triumphantly, and stepping in himself, closed the door behind him and stood in front of it.

Bébée gave one bewildered look about her, then with a cry of helplessness sank down in a heap on the floor.

"Oh, where is my mammy?" she moaned.

"Bébée! Bébée!" cried Nora running across the room, and dropping on her knees beside the prostrate figure. "I'm so glad you've come. I've

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been frettin' for fear I'd lost you. What is it, dearie?"

Bébée had staggered to her feet and turned toward the door.

"Mammy! Mammy!" she wailed piteously. "I must find my mammy."

"No, ye don't," cried Johnny Clancy, as he barred her way out of the room. "Here ye stay till ye give Miss Nora her ring. Make her give it to ye," he ended, addressing Nora.

At Johnny's words Bébée seemed to rouse herself.

"I'd forgotten the ring," she said, turning slowly to Nora; and she staggered and would have fallen had Mr. O'Neil not caught her.

"Sure the child is weak with hunger!" he exclaimed, taking her up in his arms and carrying her to the sofa, where he laid her tenderly. "Call mam'selle, Nora, and find some food."

Nora had rung the bell ere the sentence was finished. At the word "hunger" she suddenly realized that in all probability Bébée had had nothing to eat since she had seen her.

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"The poor, poor baby," she murmured to herself and gave the bell-rope another vigorous pull.

Bébée, however, had pushed herself up to a sitting position and was shaking her head.

"I'm entirely well," she insisted, feebly. "I only want my mammy. He told me he would bring me to her," and she pointed an accusing finger at Johnny.

"Where is her mother?" demanded Mr. O'Neil, sternly, the sight of the child's evident suffering arousing his sympathy.

"Sure I don't know where her mother is, Mr. O'Neil," the embarrassed boy attempted to explain. "Leastwise I don't know where she is *to-day*. I can find her if you give me time. I'm great at findin' things."

"Oh, what shall I do?" moaned Bébée. "Mammy must be mighty worried about me. I must go and hunt for her," and she attempted to rise.

"Don't you let her go, Miss Nora," said Johnny. "She's tryin'—"

"Daddy!" cried Nora, in an authoritative voice,

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"take Johnny Clancy away from here and leave me with Bébée."

"We 're not wanted, Johnny," said Mr. O'Neil, "so we 'll be goin'," and he pushed the boy ahead of him out of the room.

Nora bent over Bébée, who, after a vain effort to get to her feet, fell back against the cushions of the sofa.

"I can't think what 's come over me," she said weakly.

"When did you have your dinner?" asked Nora.

"It does n't matter," answered Bébée, with indifference. "Mammy will give me something to eat when I find her."

Just then Mam'selle came in to ask what was wanted and Nora gave her orders hurriedly.

"Bring me milk and cakes and tea and jam," she burst out, shoving Mam'selle toward the door. "Don't wait for hot things, but send the milk at once."

"I shall not eat your food," cried Bébée in an hostile voice, while two pink spots burned on her olive cheeks. "I 'm not a beggar."

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Instantly Nora saw what was in the child's mind.

"Sure you would n't be unkind and not share me little tea-party," said Nora coaxingly. "'T is a fine excuse, havin' you here, for Daddy's no hand at tea at all and I just love it. When I saw ye step in at the door my heart just leaped for joy to think I could have a cup and maybe a cracker or two and a glass of milk. 'T is so seldom I have the chance. You would n't be disappointin' me now, I know."

The soft, coaxing, Irish voice had its effect and the tangled black head sank back against the anti-macassar, while Nora busied herself in arranging a table near the sofa and getting things ready.

A little later Mam'selle hurried in with the tray but Nora had no thought of having her governess about, and quickly sent her off for other things. Then she drew up a chair opposite Bébée.

"'T is good milk they have in this place," she said, pouring out a glass for each of them. "Tell

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me now, did ye ever taste better?" and she put her own glass to her lips.

Poor little Bébée! With an effort not to seem too hungry, she raised the glass and ere she set it down had drained it. So evident was it that she was half-starved that tears came into Nora's eyes and she had to turn away her head to hide her feelings.

"It 's very good milk," said Bébée as she put the glass on the table, "and I was very thirsty." She did n't ask for any more nor did Nora at that moment fill her glass again. That was done a little later without any comment.

Then in the most tactful way, laughing and chattering all the time, though her heart was sore for the hungry girl before her, Nora prevailed upon her to eat. All that Bébée did was done as a favor to her, and when, after they had been eating cakes, Mam'selle brought in two plates of hot soup, Nora still complained that she felt hungry.

"Sure I never ate soup for dessert before, and I 'm sure you did n't, but I 'm fair ravenous this

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day," she commented, blowing on a spoonful, "and Bébée dear," she leaned forward and whispered to her visitor, "do me the favor just to stuff yourself and keep me in countenance before Mam'selle. 'T is shamed I 'd feel, eatin' all alone, and she lookin' at me."

And thus persuaded Bébée ate her soup to the last drop.

A little later she suddenly rose. "Thank you for a delightful time," she said, quite formally, with the slightest of bows to Nora. "I must be going now, but it was such a pleasant tea-party."

CHAPTER XII

WHERE IS THE RING?

AS Bébée started for the door Mr. O'Neil and Johnny Clancy came in.

"Sure you 're lookin' better already," said Mr. O'Neil, kindly to Bébée. "What you needed—" but Nora cut him short.

"Oh, we 've had the finest tea-party ye ever saw, though, to be sure, Bébée's appetite could n't compare with mine. I thought I'd never get enough."

"I must go now," Bébée insisted, moving forward.

"Oh, but ye can't," cried Nora, putting an arm about her. "The streets are dangerous, are n't they, Daddy?" and Nora shook her head meaningly at her father.

"The streets are somethin' terrible!" declared

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Mr. O'Neil, with conviction. "A policeman would n't be safe abroad this night. Ye'll be stayin' with us till mornin', anyways," he added to Bébée.

"I must find my mammy," she answered positively, and then, addressing Johnny Clancy, "You said you could find her."

"So I can," he replied, "but you must give me time."

"She must be so worried," sighed Bébée.

"Me dear," said Mr. O'Neil, putting his hand gently on the child's shoulder, "leave us to find your mammy. You could n't do it to-night yourself, and I'll see that Johnny starts a search for her the first thing to-morrow."

"And I'll get the ring at the same time if ye tell me where you've hid it," said Johnny truculently.

"Oh, yes, the ring," murmured Bébée, and a worried and anxious look came into the drawn little face. "I must go," she insisted.

"Ye'll not go till ye tell where that ring is," declared Johnny aggressively.

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Bébée shrank from him with evident distaste. "I will get it as soon as I can," she said, "only you must let me go myself."

Johnny laughed derisively. "And never come back," he grunted.

"Will you keep quiet, Johnny Clancy!" Nora cried angrily. "'T is my ring, and I'll not have the child bothered with it."

"And I'll not have her go out in the streets this night, ring or no ring," declared Mr. O'Neil positively. "I could n't make it right with me conscience."

"But you don't understand," moaned Bébée, turning a pair of imploring eyes to him. "I *must* go."

"Is it on account of the ring?" asked Nora, and Bébée nodded.

"You lost it? Is that it?" she went on.

"No," said Bébée, "I did n't lose it."

"Then where is it?" cried Johnny. "Tell me that, and I'll soon have it."

"If it's worryin' ye, me child, tell us what ye did with it and we'll be findin' it for ye," said Mr.

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O'Neil soothingly, "but I could n't be lettin' ye go out this night."

"But how would you know which dog it was?" Bébée asked wearily, sitting down on a chair from sheer exhaustion. "There 're so many dogs in this town."

The other three looked at each other in astonishment, shaking their heads wonderingly.

"Me dear," said Mr. O'Neil to Bébée, "don't worry your little brain any more. Sure you 're wore out and don't know what you 're sayin'. Nonie darlin', take her into your room and let mam'selle give her a warm bath and put her to bed. 'T is rest she needs, and we 'll talk about the ring in the mornin'."

Bébée flushed and stood up.

"I would have been quite clean except that I lost my mammy," she half sobbed. Nora put an arm about her and led her from the room.

"Of course you 'd have been clean, dearie," she crooned. "You 're nothing to what I was when I got here. You should have seen me. I was in a pickle!" and the door closed behind them, while

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Mr. O'Neil and Johnny Clancy stood looking on.

“‘Dogs,’ ” Mr. O'Neil murmured, “the poor child is nigh losin' her reason. ‘Rings and dogs,’ poor baby!”

“She's foolin' ye,” said Johnny Clancy. “She's not so simple as she makes out to be. Miss Nora had better lock up her jewelry. The ring's gone anyway, and she's sold it, I'll be bound.”

“Johnny, you're a fool,” declared Mr. O'Neil gently. “Is it likely the child would starve with money in her pocket got from sellin' the ring?”

“She's give it to her mammy,” insisted Johnny, stubbornly.

“Then go out and find her mammy,” suggested Mr. O'Neil. “'T is plain the child wants her, and you're the only one who has seen her. Do ye think ye would know her again?”

“Certain sure I'd know her,” answered Johnny. “And I'll try, too.”

“That's a good lad,” said Mr. O'Neil. “Take care of yourself, though I'm not much afraid of your getting harmed. I've arranged for ye to

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sleep here in the hotel. And Johnny," he added, as the boy was making for the door, "get over your notion that the child stole the ring. When you 're as old as me you 'll be able to tell honesty when ye see it, no matter what circumstances may be against it. There 's somethin' in the look of an honest person, be it man, woman, or child. You 're a good boy but ye 've a lot to learn yet."

"Maybe," answered Johnny, "I 'll say nothin' more, but I 've got me own opinion all the same," and he went out.

Mr. O'Neil seated himself in his favorite chair.

"I wonder whose child she can be?" he murmured thinking of Bébée. "Sure, 't is a queer world we 're livin' in," and he puzzled over the matter till at last Nora came softly out of her room and ran to him.

"I 've put her to bed," she whispered. "The poor baby was dead beat. I wish you could see her, Daddy. She 's the prettiest little thing in the world. Do ye think ye could take a peep without disturbin' her, through the doorway just?"

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"We won't risk wakin' her. Come in me lap and talk to me," answered Mr. O'Neil, and Nora nestled in his arms.

"She 's a queer little thing," Nora went on, still full of Bébée. "And that sensitive you 'd hardly believe it, considerin' what she is. Why, when I was givin' her her bath—"

"What call had you to give her a bath," Mr. O'Neil cut in. "What was Mam'selle doin'?"

"Faith, I sent her home in no time," answered Nora with a hint of resentment in her voice. "Sure Bébée is beautiful, no one knows that better than me—I mean, I. But I 'm not goin' to have notions put into her head to make her vain. Mam'selle was all of a flutter over her. 'T was 'such hair,' and 'such eyes,' and 'such dimples,' and 'such a skin,' till ye 'd think she 'd gone crazy. 'T is true enough she 's a beautiful child; but I 'll be tellin' her things 't is good for her to know, and I won't have her spoiled before her time. 'T is a thing ye may be rememberin' yourself, Daddy. 'T is bad, flatterin' a child."

"I 've no intention of spoilin' her," answered

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Mr. O'Neil meekly. "I've been thinkin' 't will be best to have her stay with Mam'selle till we find her own people."

"Now where would be the sense of that?" demanded Nora. "Such queer notions as men do get sometimes!"

"But sometimes they look ahead a bit, Nonie darlin'," answered her father, hugging her close to him. "Ye see, dearie, I've a notion ye might get too fond of little Bébée."

"Too fond of her?" questioned Nora.

"'T is nothing against the child, I'm thinkin'," said Mr. O'Neil, "but of my Nonie. Ye see, after ye began to love the child, ye'd be pretty sore in your heart to have her parents turn up and take her from ye. Now would n't ye?"

Nora snuggled closer and put her head against her father's cheek.

"I've thought of that," she said softly.

"Oh, have ye?" said he, in a tone of surprise.

Nora nodded her head and for a moment or two was silent.

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"Daddy," she began finally, "will ye always be stayin' with me now?"

"No, darlin', I can't promise that till the war is over," answered Mr. O'Neil, stroking her hair.

"Then your winnin' at Vicksburg does n't end it? I was hopin' it would."

"I 'm afraid not," answered Mr. O'Neil. "The poor boys in the South is fightin' for all they have in the world and 't will be bitter. They won't give up yet."

"And ye 'll leave me alone with Mam'selle, for dear knows how long?" sighed Nora.

"I must go if I 'm needed," her father explained, "ye know that, darlin'. I 've got me plain duty, just as if I was a soldier, and at least ye can be sure me life 's not in danger."

"But I 'm so lonely when you 're gone, Daddy. Could n't ye send a substitute? Other men do."

Mr. O'Neil threw back his head and laughed.

"Ye 're a keen one, Nonie," he cried admiringly, "but 't is me experience that 's valuable, not me life, and I can't get a substitute for that."

"Well, then," said Nora, wriggling a little in

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his arms, "perhaps you could buy a substitute to stay with me."

"Buy a substitute for your father!" exclaimed Mr. O'Neil, opening wide his eyes. "Nonie, 't is the queer creature ye are."

"Oh, 't is not a substitute *father*, I 'm wantin'," she laughed back. "There could n't be anything as great as that—but a substitute companion might be managed. Some one I could love and take care of and—and—oh, Daddy, when you 're gone I 've nothin' to warm me heart. Mam'-selle 's kind and all that; but you could n't love her, could ye, Daddy?"

"No, I don't think ye could," admitted Mr. O'Neil.

"Then do you mind what I was askin' you for last night?" Nora murmured.

"Was it another ring?" he asked, forgetting.

Nora shook her head.

"No, I have jewelry enough."

"Then I can't think what it was, but I tell ye now 't is yours if money can buy it," said Mr. O'Neil.

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“’T is a little slave of me own, I want you to buy me,” Nora answered earnestly. “Then when you ’re gone I can take care of her and—and, oh, Daddy, you see it would be finer than any dog, don’t you?”

“Nora dear, ’t is out of the question,” answered Mr. O’Neil. “Don’t you know the President has issued orders against it?”

“How would Mr. Lincoln find out about me havin’ just one little slave, Daddy?” Nora pleaded. “Sure, he can’t have time to be lookin’ everywhere. He ’d never know. Please, Daddy, ’t is the only thing I ever asked ye for.”

“Ah, but dearie,” answered Mr. O’Neil, realizing by the child’s earnestness how seriously she had set her heart on this, “now that the President has issued his Emancipation Proclamation ye could n’t find a slave to buy.”

“Oh, I ’ve found one already,” cried Nora. “She ’s asleep in my bed. The very dearest little slave in all the world!”

Mr. O’Neil sat up straight and looked at Nora attentively.

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"Me dear child," he said gravely, "did you really think little Bébée was a colored girl?"

"Why, yes, Daddy," answered Nora, a doubtful look coming into her face. "Johnny said she was, and all the boys said so, and her mother's as black as coal and—"

"Nonie dear, little Bébée is as white as we are. There's no doubt of that," answered Mr. O'Neil positively.

"Oh," said Nora, half to herself, "I wonder what difference that will make?"

Before Mr. O'Neil could reply, there came a knock at the door. Lady Castleton's card was handed to him, and a few minutes later she was ushered in.

"I've such a curious matter to tell you about," she began at once. "I've been trying to get in touch with you all day." She fumbled for a moment in her reticule and then held something out in her hand.

"Is n't this Nora's diamond ring?" she asked.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW BEBEE MET THE DUKE

FOR a moment or two Nora and her father gazed at the ring held out in Lady Castleton's fingers as if they could not believe their eyes. It was as if it had suddenly dropped from the skies. Presently Nora took the ring and examined it while her father looked over her shoulder.

"Sure 't is the same one," said Mr. O'Neil at last, in an awed voice. "Did the child give it to ye?"

"No child gave it to me," answered Lady Castleton.

"Oh, then you found it?" asked Nora quickly.

"No, it was the Duke who found it, if you can call it finding," Lady Castleton replied.

"Ye mind she said something of dogs and I thought her crazed with weariness!" exclaimed Mr. O'Neil to Nora.

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"Oh, please sit down, Lady Castleton, and tell us all about it," begged Nora, pushing up a chair invitingly.

"Fortunately for you, my maid Edmonds is an honest woman," Lady Castleton began, when she was comfortably seated. "When she was combing the Duke, on their return from a little walk before he went to bed, she found this ring on a gold chain fastened around his neck. She came running in to me, with her eyes bulging, as well they might, holding out the ring as if it would bite. I recognized it at once as the elegant monstrosity you had given Nora some time ago." This last remark she made directly to Mr. O'Neil, but that gentleman was quite oblivious to the implied criticism of the appropriateness of his gift.

"I thought Nora must have put it on him in play and forgotten it; but Edmonds assured me that he was not wearing it when she had given him his afternoon brushing," Lady Castleton continued, "so I was at sea again."

"The whole thing seems like a miracle to me," Mr. O'Neil ejaculated. "To think that of all the

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dogs in New York she should have hit on this one."

"She?" questioned Lady Castleton. "Do you mean Nora?"

"Have her in, Nonie," commanded her father, "I'm burstin' with curiosity to know how the ring came to be round the neck of that dog."

"But, Daddy, she's asleep," protested Nora.

"That's so," agreed Mr. O'Neil rather reluctantly, "we must let it go till mornin', for the poor child was dead beat and no mistake."

"Who is she?" demanded Lady Castleton. "This child you speak of."

But when Mr. O'Neil and Nora, the latter very voluble and excited, told all they knew of Bébée, Lady Castleton seemed indifferent. She agreed that it was strange that the ring should have come back as it had, but further than that she showed little interest, her mind was on other matters.

"Some poor street child," she said at the end; "she probably did n't know its value, and I think you are extremely lucky to get it back again. You must tell me some day how it happened to find

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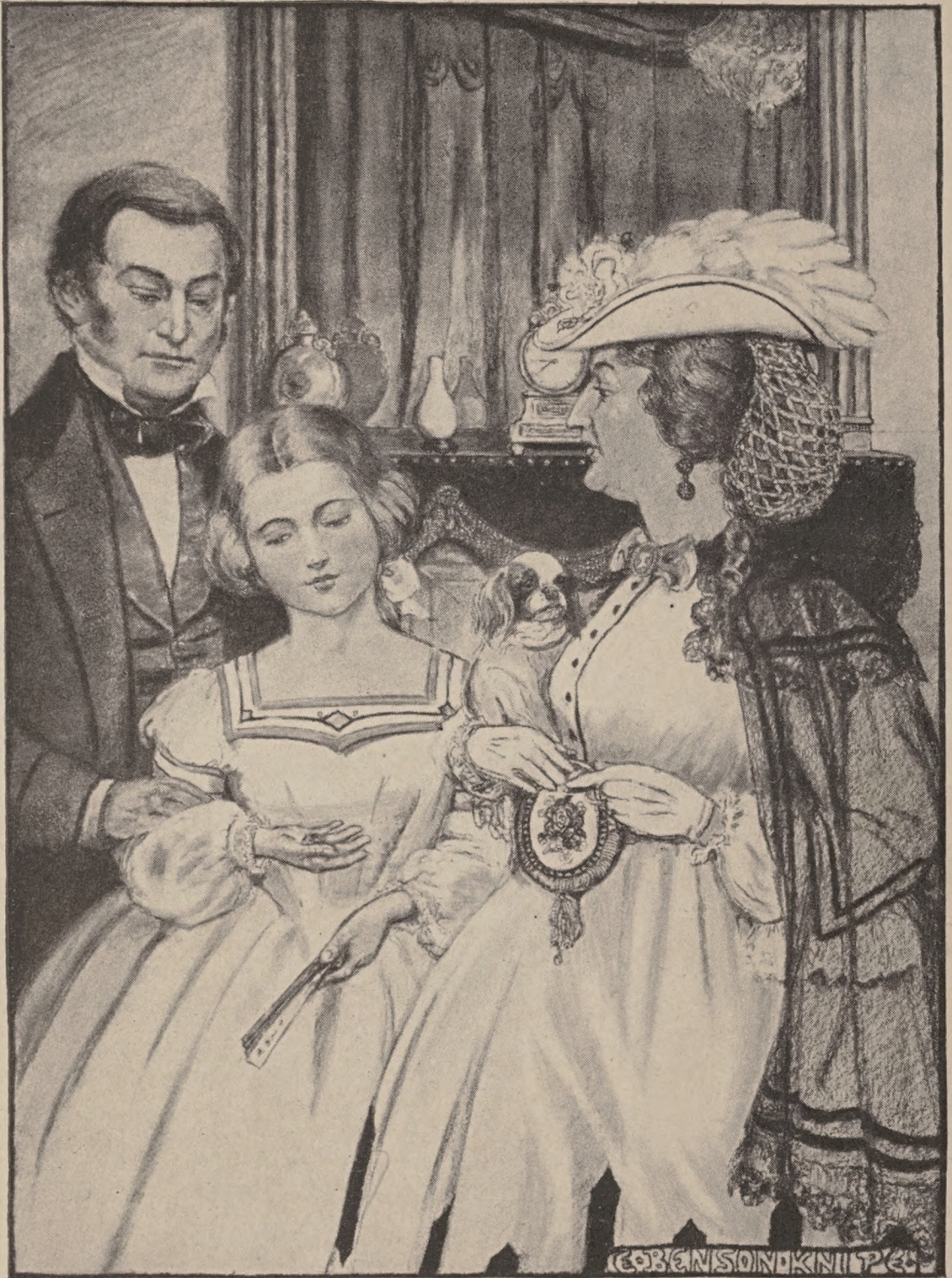
its way around the Duke's neck. And, by the way, the chain it was hung on was broken. Edmonds found it so twisted that it parted while she was removing it. I sent it to Tiffany's to be mended."

"Sure your ladyship need n't have gone to that trouble," protested Mr. O'Neil.

"'T was no trouble at all," replied Lady Castleton. "I had one or two things to be repaired and sent the chain with them. But I am deeply interested in any news you may have for me of the search for my grandniece."

Mr. O'Neil shook his head.

"I'm sorry to say, Lady Castleton, that I have none. The fact is, it will take some time to find out anything. There are many difficulties in the way of our getting any information from the South or from the Rebel army. Of one thing, however, I can assure you. There is neither a Dennis Burke nor a Patrick Cochrane among our prisoners. So far I've gone; but there is no telling when I can come by word of them, living or dead, if they fought with the South. Your lady-



“I recognized it as the elegant monstrosity you had given Nora”

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ship will have to be patient and rely upon my doing all that any one could do."

Lady Castleton rose with a sigh of mingled regret and discontent.

"I must thank you, Mr. O'Neil, for your trouble," she said on leaving, "but I cannot conceal the fact that I am much disappointed, for I had been hoping that I might leave this country, with its riots and its war, and get back to Ireland where there are many things that require my attention. I shall, however, try to be patient." And with a few words of good-by, and an invitation to Nora to bring Bébée to see her, Lady Castleton went away.

It was rather pathetic to see the relief Bébée showed when she was told that the ring had been recovered.

"I was so worried about it," she said, in a funny grown-up way. "I was sure I could find that dog again, but of course, until I had, I could n't help being anxious. It was a great 'sponsibility."

Mr. O'Neil shook his head, puzzled.

"Takin' it for granted you 'd known the Duke,

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how did the ring get on the little tyke? That's what I want to hear," he insisted.

"Yes, dear," said Nora with a smile of encouragement, "tell us the whole story from the time you left me. We're in no hurry this day, seein' the streets are still dangerous."

"You remember," Bébée began readily, "that the horrid woman pushed me away when I tried to stop her pulling you?"

"Yes," answered Nora, "I remember perfectly. You were that mad I could see it in your face."

"She had no right to touch you!" declared Bébée, quite vehemently for her; "but I saw that there was nothing I could do alone, and I remembered that I had the ring. If she found it, you would never see it again, I was quite sure. You had trusted it to me and—and it was a mighty big 'sponsibility."

"Ah, you poor dear, worryin' your little head over it," said Nora sympathetically.

"I wanted to keep it safe for you," Bébée continued, "so I thought the best thing for me to do was to hide. I ran up to the next corner and

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crowded under a balcony in the dark. Just then a man come stumbling along and he called out to some one else I could n't see, 'The soldiers are over on the Avenoo!' and off he went on the run. But I thought that if I found the soldiers they would help you, so I slipped out and went for them. They were only a little way off, but the crowd had taken all their guns away from them. They would n't come with me though I begged them to ever so hard. I told them there was a thieving woman trying to rob you, and they laughed at me saying that there were thieves on every corner in New York, and they could n't do anything because their orders were to keep together. So I went back to find you, but you were gone, and then I saw some of those bad boys and I ran away again as fast as I could."

"You poor little child," commented Mr. O'Neil, softly.

"I did n't know what to do," Bébée continued. "I waited for a little under that gallery I told you about and then I could n't stand it any longer and I started out to find the Fifth Avenue Hotel

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where I thought Johnny said you lived. It was so dark and there were n't any lamps lit. I was very lonesome and I wanted Mammy awfully, but I asked people the way to the hotel and at last I got there."

"And you heard no word of your mammy?" asked Mr. O'Neil.

Bébée shook her head.

"Every one wanted to know what her name was," she explained, "and when I told them it was just 'Mammy' they scolded and said they did n't 'have any time to waste on such foolishness,' and went off."

"But what is her name?" asked Nora with excusable curiosity.

"Just Mammy," replied Bébée simply. "I said so before. 'My Mammy' is all the name I know."

Mr. O'Neil shook his head, puzzled.

"Go on with your tale, child," he said. "I'm thinkin' of that dog and how it came by the ring."

"I found the hotel at last," Bébée continued "after walking and walking. You see I thought Nora might have gotten back, and, if not, I could

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give the ring to some of her family, for I did want to get rid of it. Then I could go and look for Mammy in earnest, but, so long as I had that diamond, I had to take care of it. It was a 'sponsibility, you see. Well, at the hotel they told me they did n't know you. There were a lot of cross men about and they would n't let me go inside. I was sure you lived there, and when I would n't give up they called some one they said would surely know. But he said you did n't, and so they sent me away."

"You poor baby!" cried Nora, patting the child's hand affectionately.

"'T was a turrible experience," murmured Mr. O'Neil.

"And what did you do then?" asked Nora.

"I thought at first I would go into the little park across the street and rest," Bébée explained. "You see I *was* tired, but there were soldiers there and they would n't let any one in. You remember there are some houses 'way over there with little gardens in front of them? I thought that was the next best place for me, so I crept into one of

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those and curled down under a bush and went fast asleep in a minute. I think I never was so tired."

"And there ye stayed till mornin', hey?" Mr. O'Neil cut in, but the child shook her head.

"I got awake after a while, feeling some one pulling at my clothes, trying to find my pocket, and just then there was the sound of some one else coming along the street. The man who had hold of my dress slid back into the bushes. He knew he 'd waked me, for he said, 'If you cry out, I'll stick a knife in you!' The steps came along and stopped at the fence near us."

"Did n't you call for help?" asked Nora.

"It was only a woman," answered Bébée. "I did n't see what she could do. But the man had left the gate ajar and a little animal ran in and came sniffing around where I lay."

"The Duke!" cried Nora, triumphantly. Bébée nodded.

"I knew it at once for the same dog I had noticed at the hotel," she said simply. "I 'd never seen another like it, and it put an idea into my

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head. I was so afraid that the man would find the ring that I slipped off the chain and, twisting it tight round the dog's neck, clasped it there. Then I had n't anything left that was worth stealing."

"Are you sure you could have recognized the dog again?" asked Mr. O'Neil.

"I'd have known it at once," replied Bébée positively, and Nora confirmed this.

"Of course she'd known him, Daddy. Do you suppose I would n't know the Duke if I met him in China? He's so different from other dogs."

"Well, you're a brave baby," declared Mr. O'Neil admiringly. "What happened to ye then?"

"There was n't much more," Bébée continued. "After the woman went away, the man made me get up and go over to a street lamp, but when he looked at me he just laughed and said something about wasting time and left me. Then it began to rain and I crawled under a balcony where it was pretty dry and I was so tired I slept till morning. I wandered about all day looking for

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Mammy, 'cause, not having the ring, I could do that, you see. When it began to grow dark I felt more lonesome and I walked back to the hotel again, hoping to see Nora, 'cause I could n't get it out of my head that she lived there. They told me not to bother them, and just then Johnny came up. That 's all."

It was a pathetic little story that Bébée had told, and Nora had tears in her eyes when it was finished. Mr. O'Neil, too, was more than a little impressed, and he kept repeating, "You 're the brave baby," again and again, looking at her intently, as if there was something about her he could n't quite make out.

"You 'll be safe with us now till these riots are over," said Nora consolingly.

"But I 'm 'bliged to find my mammy," replied Bébée. "You see she 's worrying about me all this time."

"But you can't go out to-day, my child," Mr. O'Neil objected in his kindly way. "I could n't have you runnin' the risk of it. You 've had trouble enough. You 'll be stayin' here, keepin'

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Nonie company, till things are better, and then we 'll find your mammy."

Bébée was forced to be content with this arrangement, nor did she protest unduly, though it was plain to be seen that the child was still worried and anxious.

"Perhaps Johnny Clancy will find her," Nora said encouragingly. "He's fine at findin' people—and meanwhile we'll have a grand time."

All that day Nora spent in an endeavor to make Bébée feel at home, and very soon the two were as friendly as if they had known each other for years. There was no resisting Nora when she set out to please any one, and the strange child responded quickly to the motherly care lavished upon her.

Toward evening there came a note from Lady Castleton, containing the information that she had been sent for to return to Ireland on important business and, not seeing any chance of finding her grandniece in the immediate future, it being steamer-day she was taking a passage that of-

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ferred, and begged Mr. O'Neil to look after her interests during her absence.

"Oh, that's too bad," exclaimed Nora in real distress. "She's sailed to-day, and now Bébée won't see the Duke again."

"But what has she done with my chain?" asked Bébée. "It was such a pretty chain and I meant to keep it always."

"Her ladyship says something about that," said Mr. O'Neil, taking the letter out again. "Ah, here it is. 'I've instructed Tiffany's to send the chain to you when it is repaired. I am sorry not to have seen Nora and you to say good-by.' There you are," continued Mr. O'Neil folding up the letter. "'T is just as well her ladyship's gone. She could do no good here and would be worryin' herself, and me, every minute. 'T is not as if I need any spur to keep me on the look-out. Were it me own Nora I could do no more with the country in the state it now is."

At bedtime Nora saw to it that Bébée was tucked in, and then ran out to her father for their little evening conference.

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"I 'm sorry Lady Castleton did n't see her," she said, meaning Bébée, of course. "She's so pretty, is n't she, Daddy?"

"She is that," agreed Mr. O'Neil, heartily. "As pretty as a picture, and a fine brave girl. Me heart aches, thinkin' of what she must have been through."

"Would n't it be splendid if we could n't find her mammy after all?" said Nora.

Mr. O'Neil looked his surprise.

"Now what's this notion has come into your head?" he asked. "Sure ye don't want the child lost entirely?"

"Sure, that's exactly what I *do* want!" Nora declared with emphasis. "'T would just suit me if we never heard of her mammy or any one else belongin' to her. 'T would be fine."

"Nora O'Neil!" cried her father shocked. "Have ye no feelin's for the poor parents of the child, and don't ye think the little girl would grieve for her father and mother?"

"I 'll not be pretendin' I have any sorrow for the parents," Nora affirmed vehemently. "What

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call had they to leave her with an old black woman, too fat to run? I 'm thinkin' parents of that kind are n't fit to have a dear child like Bébée. And as to her grievin',—I 'll see to that."

Mr. O'Neil began to catch the drift of Nora's remarks.

"Ye 're thinkin' to keep her always with ye. Is that it?"

"Aye, Daddy, that 's just it," answered Nora, enthusiastically. "Think how comfortin' it would be to you to know I was n't alone, and if the President won't let me have a little slave, sure 't is none of his business how many sisters I have! When you 're here, Daddy," she went on, "there 's naught in the world I 'm wantin'. But you go away, ye know ye do, and I 'm left alone with nothin' to love. Think of that, Daddy, and you 'll be understandin' how I 'm longin' to keep Bébée with me always. 'T was a dog I wanted first, but now—" she stopped, not finding words to express her joy at the prospect.

Mr. O'Neil was worried.

"Nonie, me darlin'," he said anxiously.

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“Don’t be gettin’ these notions in your head. There’s no chance of our keepin’ this child. For a day or two, maybe, she’ll be with us, till things get settled in the city; but she’ll be found, me dear. Ye may be sure of that, and if your heart gets set on it, ’t will be a sore disappointment to have to let her go.”

Nora sat quietly for a long time, then she gave a huge sigh and lifting herself in her father’s arms, she kissed him good night.

“I think, Daddy,” she said softly, “me heart is set on it. Ever since I saw her first, when I thought she was a little colored girl and wanted her for a slave so that I could take care of her and do for her, and—and—oh, you know, love her, I’ve been thinkin’ of her.”

“’T will only make ye unhappy, Nonie darlin’,” said her father, an anxious look on his face, “and that, ye know, me dear, is something I can’t stand.”

“Daddy, I can’t help hopin’,” Nora confessed with a little sob. “I’m so lonesome when you’re away.” She walked toward the door of her room,

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deep in thought. Then she turned again and looked at Mr. O'Neil with a wrinkled forehead. "Daddy," she said earnestly, "why could n't I have been born twins," and Mr. O'Neil, not being able to find an answer, she went off to bed.

CHAPTER XIV

A STRANGE MAN WITH A HOOKED NOSE

MR. O'NEIL sitting alone after Nora had gone to bed, saw very clearly the danger of his daughter's becoming too attached to the little stranger who was with them, and determined to forestall this by doing all in his power to find the darky mammy as soon as he could.

In furtherance of this he talked to the child the next day, trying to draw out her name and something of her history, but she seemed very reticent and only shook her head, insisting that her mother was dead and that she had no one to care for her but Mammy. As to her name it was Bébé, and that was all. A mention of her father brought painful confusion, and when Mr. O'Neil would have persisted, she said plaintively, "Please don't talk about him," and burst into tears, thus effectively closing the subject.

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Several days passed before the city was quiet enough for them to drive around in the hope of finding the old colored woman. But, though they discovered the ruins of the house where Bébée said she had lived before the riots, nothing was learned of Mammy's whereabouts.

Meanwhile the days were hurrying into weeks and the children were growing more and more attached. What Mr. O'Neil had dreaded was rapidly coming to pass and Bébée was becoming part of the O'Neil family.

"'T is a poor livin' I 'd make as detective," he admitted to himself, but in the end he began to believe that the old negress must have died, a victim of the mob's cruelty.

Johnny Clancy, however, had by no means given up the search.

"I 'm good at findin' people," he insisted, and so he kept the matter in mind after the others had given up hope.

The passing days brought nearer the date set for Mr. O'Neil's departure for Washington. Also the weather was very hot and he was anxious

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to see the children comfortably installed out of town.

“’T is time we were goin’ away,” he said to Nora, one evening when they were alone. “I ’m thinkin’ Cape May would be a fine place for ye. There’s a new railroad opened there, and it’s goin’ to have a great season.”

“I ’d love it, Daddy—I mean, papa,” Nora answered with enthusiasm.

“Then ye ’d better be buyin’ some new frills for yourself and this baby of yours.”

Nora wrinkled her brows.

“I don’t know, will she let me,” she remarked thoughtfully. “She ’s that proud ’t is scandalous. She folds up each thing of mine she wears and puts it back, just as careful.”

“Well, go see how she takes the notion,” Mr. O’Neil suggested. “Lead up to it and keep dwellin’ on the dresses. Girls likes frills, ye mind.”

Nora went and Mr. O’Neil, swaying back and forth in his rocking chair, was surprised when Bébée came in alone a little later.

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"I 've made Nonie cry," she said with a sigh. "But I can't help it. I must go away."

"Nonsense! Nonsense! Where would ye be goin', me dear?" demanded Mr. O'Neil.

"I don't know," the child answered, miserably. "I can't do washing like Mammy, but I might sell papers. Johnny Clancy does,—and you must have a little money for the landlady."

Mr. O'Neil's soft heart melted.

"Me dear, we 'll play I 'm the landlord," he said gently. "Ye don't need money to pay me. Just give me a kiss now and then and 't will be all the pay I 'll be askin'."

Tears came into Bébée's eyes.

"You and Nonie are so good to me and—and—but I can't be a beggar!" she blurted out at length.

Mr. O'Neil sat thoughtful for a moment and then he slapped his knee so hard that Bébée jumped.

"I have it!" he cried, and pulled her down on his lap. "Ye may have noticed that we keep a governess in this family?" Bébée nodded.

"Well, governesses is wonderful expensive," he

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explained, drawing a long face, "ye 've no notion how much that French mam'selle costs me. She 's keepin' her family in lux'ry at this moment, and I tell ye in confidence, me dear, that she 's not the least use for anything but what they call dead languages like French and German."

Bébée did n't quite understand, but she was listening intently.

"Now I don't care for French," Mr. O'Neil continued, "not for meself, I mean. I 'm all for the English when it comes to talkin', and ye perhaps have observed, that once in a long while Nonie and me makes mistakes."

"Yes," answered Bébée, "I have. Like 'Nonie and me' and 'makes.' "

"Well, I see nothin' wrong there," said Mr. O'Neil, quite puzzled, "but never mind that now. I did n't have a governess runnin' about teachin' me when I was a bit of a gossoon. So 't is that sort of learnin' we 'll be wantin' from some one who knows. There 's another thing I 'd call to your attention and that 's the matter of substitutes. Nora 's wantin' one."

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"Substitutes?" Bébée repeated vaguely.

"Aye," went on Mr. O'Neil. "If a fella goes to the war for ye, ye pay him three hundred dollars or more. Substitutes comes high, ye understand."

"I think I see," replied Bébée, uncertainly.

"Well, 't is a substitute for me, when I 'm away that Nonie wants," he explained. "Some one that will scold her—like I do—and boss her about—and give her her own way in everything—like me, ye mind."

Bébée looked at his serious face for a moment.

"I don't think you know how to scold," she said. "You always do everything we want you to."

"We 're gettin' away from the subject of substitutes," Mr. O'Neil reminded her with a smile. "I need one to stay with Nora when I 'm gone, but ye can't get a first-class one for less than three hundred dollars, as I told you, and that 's a power o' money!"

"It sounds as if it was," remarked Bébée, anxiously.

A STRANGE MAN

"Does n't it now?" agreed Mr. O'Neil. "Sure you 're the clever girl to tell expensive things be the sound of 'em; but now here 's me point. If I could get a substitute and an English governess rolled into one I 'd be makin' money, and that 's a great comfort to a man of my savin' disposition. So the long and the short of it is, will ye take the job? I 'll give ye your board and your clothes and a bit of spendin' money now and then; but I warn ye it would cost more, if I was gettin' what ye might call a real professional."

"Oh, Mr. O'Neil!" cried Bébée hugging him, "let me go and tell Nonie," and she scrambled off his knee and ran out of the room joyfully.

"I 'm a queer man," thought Mr. O'Neil. "Here, when I have the chance to let her go, I 'm doin' all in me power to keep the child. Faith, she 's a winnin' little thing and no mistake, but I misdoubt there 's heartaches in store for me Nonie."

He had little time to dwell on these gloomy speculations, for the next minute the girls rushed into the room and threw themselves upon him.

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"Oh, but you 're the grand man!" cried Bébée excitedly.

"Faith," exclaimed Mr. O'Neil laughing heartily, "ye 'll be losin' your job if ye catch the brogue!" Which Bébée took quite seriously, for she said, earnestly, "I 'll be very careful."

In the midst of their chattering and planning, there came a sudden sharp knock on the door and, without waiting for permission to enter, Johnny Clancy burst into the room.

"I 've found her! I 've found her!" he cried.

"Who have ye found?" demanded Mr. O'Neil.

"Her mammy," Johnny replied pointing at Bébée.

For what seemed a long time all three looked at Johnny in amazement.

"Sure I don't think ye care whether I found her or not," he blurted out, much disappointed.

"Oh, yes, we do!" exclaimed Bébée. "Tell me where she is. I must go to her."

"Well, she ain't anywhere that I knows of," he answered enigmatically. "She 's gone off."

"Now what do ye mean by that?" demanded

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Mr. O'Neil, more brusquely than was usual with him. "Out with your story and don't have too many words about it."

"'T was right near the hotel, I saw her," Johnny began. "I knowed her for the same one I'd seen with Miss Bébée there, the minute I clapped eyes on her. So I runs and stops her just as she's walkin' away. 'Ye come with me,' I says as bold as ye please, and she looks at me and smiles. Then she sets down a clothes-basket she was carryin' and says, 'What you-all wants with me?' in a funny kind o' way of speakin'.

"'I wants you to go to your Bébée,' I says. 'We've been a-lookin' for you, till we did n't think you was ever comin' to life again.' When I says 'Bébée,' she began to take more interest, you bet. Then she starts askin' questions. Golly, she can talk! Wanted to know all about you, sir. Whether you was rich and all that. Whether you was treatin' Bébée right—and of course I told her you was."

"Is she downstairs?" asked Mr. O'Neil, cutting into Johnny's description of the interview.

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"No, she is n't," Johnny replied. "That 's the funny part of it."

"Where is she?" asked Bébée.

"She 's gone, and that 's all I know," answered Johnny. "After she 'd asked me about a thousand questions she picks up her basket, makin' ready to go on. I told her to stop, but she did n't pay no 'tention to me. Only just laughs when I tells her she must come. 'You can't cahhy me, I guess, honey,' she says, laughin' like. 'You jes' tell Miss Bébée, her ole mammy 's all right and for her not to fret she'self. She 's got washin' in plenty and is livin' fine.' That 's what she tells me, and then she waddles away, and nothin' I could do would stop her though I walked along beside her for blocks."

"Did ye find out where she lived?" asked Mr. O'Neil.

"She would n't tell me," answered Johnny.

"Well, and why did n't ye folly her?" demanded Mr. O'Neil.

"Sure I started to," the boy replied a little shamefacedly, "but she would n't have it."

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"How could she help it if ye walked behind her?" insisted Mr. O'Neil.

"She scared me," Johnny admitted. "I did walk after her but I had n't gone far when she turns on me sudden and says if I don't go 'way she 'll hoodoo me. It was n't so much what she says as how she looked that did for me. The way she rolled back her eyes till there was n't nothin' but the whites showin' was awful, and she talks about spirits till it sounded like maybe she had 'em in her basket."

A sob from Bébée interrupted Johnny's tale.

"I never thought Mammy would desert me," she murmured brokenly, while big tears slipped slowly down her cheeks.

Nora put her arms about the child to comfort her.

"But she would have taken ye away from me, darlin'," Nora repeated again and again till at length Bébée stifled her sobbing and looked at Nora in surprise.

"Oh, no, she would n't, Nonie. She could n't

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have taken me away. She's just my mammy, you know."

"Your nurse, is that it?" asked Mr. O'Neil.

"Yes—my mammy," answered Bébée.

"And where was it she brought ye from when ye came here?" Mr. O'Neil questioned, but Nora, ever on her guard against some unwelcome piece of information, cut in before Bébée had time to answer.

"Don't be botherin' her, Daddy," she said, decisively. "'T is somethin' of a shock for her to hear of her old mammy so sudden-like."

"So suddenly, Nonie," Bébée corrected solemnly, with a glance at Mr. O'Neil.

"That's the way to earn your wages, me dear," said Mr. O'Neil giving Bébée a pat on the shoulder. "We'll be learnin' the real English now, I'm thinkin'."

"Thinking," said Bébée, and at the laugh that followed Nora led her out of the room.

"Humph!" grunted Mr. O'Neil after Johnny had gone and he was alone. "'T is a strange world altogether. Here I have two mysteries on

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me hands. Now if this was a story book they 'd contrive the impossible and make Bébée Miss Eileen's daughter. 'T is a queer world and no mistake."

The buying of the summer outfit preparatory to their trip to Cape May was something of an event and when they were ready to start Nora spoke to her father.

"I want slathers of money, Daddy," she announced calmly.

"Nora, you *must* say 'papa,' and not 'slathers,' " Bébée commented severely. "I think 'a mighty big lot' would be better than 'slathers.' "

" 'T is all one to me pocket-book," laughed Mr. O'Neil, as he took out a huge roll of bills and handed them to Nora.

"You 'll not need all that for just one little girl," cried Bébée, aghast.

"Oh, won't I?" replied Nora. "You shall have none but the best."

"The best is always cheapest in the end," declared Mr. O'Neil, and off they went.

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"I wish there was time to take you to Madame Demorest's," said Nora, as they drove to Stewart's, "but never mind. We'll go to her for your winter things." Which showed how far ahead she was planning.

Ribbons, laces, prunella gaiters and slippers, underwear, materials for dresses, silks, muslins, and linens, were all carefully selected and, long before their shopping was half finished, the little recipient was thoroughly tired of being turned around, measured, fitted and admired.

"Don't you buy me too much, Nonie," she whispered. "You've no idea how fast I grow. I'll be sticking 'way out through these things in a little while."

"Well, if ye shoot up that much," replied Nora, "the next lot we get for you will about fit me when you've done with them. Then perhaps you'll see me losin' my temper about it," and she laughed gaily. "I've heard the girls at school scold hard enough to scare a body when they had to wear their big sisters' cast-offs."

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At the end of another hour of hard work Bébée again protested.

"Surely you have enough now," she said, wriggling as the cold scissors touched her neck. "At any rate, as soon as I'm dressed I'm going out to sit in the carriage so you won't buy anything else."

"Mam'selle must decide upon the pattern of the Swiss before she leaves," one of the saleswomen murmured, while Nora, intent upon the selection of some handkerchiefs, nodded absently to Bébée that she might do as she pleased.

So Bébée wandered toward the entrance, picking her way slowly through the crowds of people and lingering here and there. She was wholesomely interested in the things about her so long as they did n't have to be tried on.

At last she reached the door in front of which she knew that William would be waiting, but as she walked out she collided with some one who was hurrying in. Both stepped back a pace, the man mumbling an apology, and then they saw

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each other. Bébé, at the first glance, gave a little cry of surprise and fright. Then, slipping past him, she ran rapidly to the carriage and climbed in hurriedly, looking quite pale and upset as she settled herself back on the cushions.

The man watched her for a moment before following her from the vestibule where the encounter had taken place, as if he intended to speak to her. But just then Nora and Mam'selle appeared, and he drew back. There was a short delay while two boys from the store piled in their many bundles, but at last the carriage drove off. Bébé, glancing back, saw the man's face relieved against a piece of bright orange-colored brocade hanging in the window, and turned away with a shudder.

The stranger followed the carriage with his eyes. His big, hooked nose gave his face a hawk-like appearance that once seen would not soon be forgotten. Even standing there on the sidewalk in the bright sunlight, he looked like some ill-omened bird of prey.

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As the errand boys returned from the curb he approached them.

"Who were those little girls?" he inquired, nodding in the direction of the departing carriage. "One of them's a perfect beauty," he added, taking a fifty-cent note out of his pocket significantly.

"They are the children of Timothy O'Neil," answered the older boy. "He's made millions out of government contracts, they say."

"Where do they live?" asked the man.

"At the Astor House," was the reply.

"And are they both his children?" his questioner persisted. "They don't look like sisters."

"I've never seen the little one before," the boy admitted. "I've seen the other though, a lot of times; and I'm sure I heard the sales-lady say, 'your little sister's a picture in it, miss,' when she gave me the parcels."

"Humm!" muttered the stranger. "Have you ever seen a fat old darky woman with them?"

"Never have," answered the boy, "but I'll lose my job if I stay here talking to you much longer,"

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and he looked suggestively at the bank bill the man held in his hand.

But that worthy put it back in his pocket with a laugh.

"You are getting all your information is worth," he sneered and walked away.

CHAPTER XV

BEBEE DECIDES TO GO TO SCHOOL

FOR many days after the shopping expedition, Bébée seemed much upset. Whenever she was out she kept a watch on the people they passed, and in the hotel she clung to Mr. O'Neil, feeling, no doubt, that she needed his protection.

Both Nora and her father noticed it, but neither said anything; the former because she dreaded an inquiry into the child's past with the consequent possibility of their being separated, and the latter for a similar reason. Mr. O'Neil had grown very fond of this addition to his family, particularly since she had taken to calling him "Uncle Tim," and nestling up to him as if she expected his care.

"I wonder," he said to Nora, one day, "whatever put it into her head to call me 'Uncle Tim'?"

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"I thought it would be better," answered Nora, shamelessly. "'T is embarrassing to the child not to have any family, and people at the sea-shore might be askin' questions."

Again, when they were almost ready to leave the city, there was a query as to what name should be put on Bébée's trunk.

"B. O'Neil," Nora answered promptly, and there the matter rested.

Once settled at the Congress Hall at Cape May, Mr. O'Neil enjoyed the holiday as much as the girls. Bébée was quick to make friends, and Nora was drawn with her into a more natural relation with other children at the resort. Her father recognized this at once and blessed the day that Bébée had come to them.

"Sure 't is little sense a man has," he thought to himself. "Here was I, tryin' to make Nonie happy by givin' her elegant trifles like a yard of the Atlantic Cable¹ set in silver, or camel's-hair

¹ Between seven and eight miles of the Atlantic Cable was cut up by Tiffany and mounted in silver to be sold for souvenirs during the "Telegraphic Jubilee," a celebration in honor of the completion of the transatlantic line in 1858.—E. B. K.

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shawls fit for her mother, while all the time what she needed was a little fun and some one to play with. 'T is only a child she is herself, for all her sensible ways."

The girls enjoyed the seashore very much while Mr. O'Neil was with them, but he had warned them that he expected to be summoned to Washington, and one morning they found a long blue envelope lying on the breakfast table.

Nora and her father recognized this signal for his hasty departure at sight, but Bébée required an explanation when she saw Nora suddenly throw her arms about Mr. O'Neil's neck.

"If I had known what it was," she said, resentfully, "I 'd have come down early and torn it up. Then you would n't have had to go away from us, Uncle Tim."

"I wish ye had, me dear," said Mr. O'Neil banteringly, "because as it is, I 'm off on the first train. But I 'm easier in me mind than I used to be before you came to take care of Nonie."

"We 'll take care of each other," said Nora with a huge sigh.

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"Are you going to the war, Uncle Tim?" asked Bébée a little later.

"No, not to the war, exactly," Mr. O'Neil replied, "though if it was n't for the war I'd not be goin'."

"Then you're not a soldier?" questioned the child, anxiously.

"No, I'm not a soldier, but I'm workin' for the Union just the same, and that's some comfort," Mr. O'Neil replied.

For a moment or two Bébée seemed to ponder this, and at last demanded rather suddenly,

"Where were you born, Uncle Tim?"

Mr. O'Neil laid down his knife and fork and regarded her curiously.

"Now what's goin' on in that head of hers?" he said to himself, and then, aloud, "Why, in Ireland, of course."

"Most every one was born there, I believe," Bébée said, and added, hesitatingly, "Why should you bother with the war when you're not an American?"

"Not an American! Me?" stuttered Mr.

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O'Neil. "With an American flag tattooed on each of me arms? Sure, me dear, I'm an American all right, and a New Yorker, too."

To their great surprise Bébée seemed to get much satisfaction from this speech and nodded her little head wisely.

"Now I understand," she said. "That 's why you are for the Union. You went with your State."

"How else would I go?" demanded Mr. O'Neil.

"The thing I think 's mean," Nora cut in, "is that ye send everything to our army and leave the Johnny Rebs to suffer."

"God save us, would ye have me send help to the enemy?" exclaimed her father. "What are ye thinkin' of, child?"

"Oh, I don't mean powder and shot," answered Nora, quite unabashed, "but I do think it would be only fair to send them clothes and food. I've heard some awful tales of the poor creatures with coats cut from floor carpets, or no coats at all. And wooden-soled shoes, and coffee made of sweet-potatoes; sure I can't but pity the helpless

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things with no one to sew a button on or cook a decent meal."

"'T is a comfortable, homey sort of war ye'd be runnin', Nonie!" said her father. "But it would be my duty to interfere with ye. Ye know it's my business to see that our men gets supplies and the rebels don't."

"Oh, you'd let me have my way if you could," replied Nora, confidently, squeezing her father's arm.

"Do ye take me for a bloody traitor, me girl?" Mr. O'Neil burst out in pretended anger.

The effect of this last remark upon Bébée was so sudden and startling that Mr. O'Neil rose from his chair, and Nora with a cry of alarm sprang to her side, for the child had shrunk away and lifted her arm before her face as if she were warding off a blow.

"Ah, me dear, me dear," crooned Mr. O'Neil, "I'll never forgive meself for frightening ye like that. I was but funnin', Bébée dear," and then, thinking that he had struck the reason for her fright, he said soothingly, "Sure 't is no disgrace

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to be a Southerner. 'T is but unreasonable they are. Don't ye be mindin' your Uncle Tim's poor jokes, and, hereafter, we'll do away with talk of the war and the like. 'T is no subject for polite conversation foreninst young ladies."

For the two little girls left in mam'selle's charge a great deal of joy seemed to have departed with Mr. O'Neil, but they were happy in having each other. Moreover they were busy, for no one was idle in those days. A great war was in progress and every one did what they could to help the soldiers at the front.

Nora and Bébée joined a society which had been formed by the ladies of Congress Hall and the Columbia House called "The Busy Bees," and there they and many other children met to scrape lint and make bandages for the wounded soldiers.

They bathed in the surf every morning and walked along the beach looking for shells; while in the evenings they danced or listened to the band concerts, and so the time passed quickly.

But the part of the day that Bébée seemed to

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like the best was the hour in the afternoon just before supper when the two girls were alone together, for then Nora would often read to her. It was through this that the discovery had been made that the child could neither read nor write herself.

"You 'll have to go to one of those new-fangled kindergartens they 've just started, when we get back to New York," sighed Nora. "I was hoping you could go to school with me."

"I won't go to any school," said Bébée positively.

"Ah, why not?" coaxed Nora.

Bébée did n't answer for a moment, and then very earnestly she asked, "If you knew a little girl whose papa was in the army, would you play with her?"

"Of course I would," answered Nora. "What a funny question."

"Some girls won't, Nonie," Bébée insisted, "and I 'm not going to school."

This matter worried Nora a good deal and she referred to it again and again, but Bébée always

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met her with that positive shake of her head. If Nora became too persistent she would stop her protests with kisses and beg her to read aloud.

Patriotic stories were much in vogue at that time and of these the most popular was "The Man Without a Country." Nora bought it, anticipating much pleasure in reading it aloud, but she was destined never to finish it.

She was about half-way through it when Bébé whose uneasiness had been growing stopped her.

"Don't read any more, Nonie," she begged, "It's such a wicked book."

Nora looked at her in surprise.

"I think it is very interesting," she said, but Bébé hardly let her get the words out.

"It's cruel to write about such things," she cried excitedly. "Perhaps that poor Mr. Nolan had a little girl. How would she feel to have people reading about her papa? Please give it to me so I can put it where Uncle Tim won't ever see it."

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There were tears in her eyes and Nora, who had wanted to finish the story, gave in at once, thrusting the book into the child's hands.

"You can hide it from your Uncle Tim. Sure you're too tender-hearted, Bébée dear. 'T is nothing for you to worry over," she went on with an arm about the child. "It is n't true just because it's in a book. 'T is the stories that people make up in their heads they're proud enough of to print; and it says never a word of a little girl, so cease frettin' over it."

She took up another book, and this tale was more fortunate, although it too had a decided effect upon Bébée.

It was a simple love story and told how a girl and boy had quarreled, though they really cared very much for each other. But the boy went off to the war and the girl was nearly heart-broken at the news and tried hard to find out where he was so that she might tell him how sorry she felt. But she could not hear a word of him. Like other girls she scraped lint and made shirts and stockings for the soldiers—

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"Just like the Busy Bees," Bébée interrupted, and Nora, nodding, continued her reading.

The girl was always thinking of her lover, fearing that he might be killed without learning how sad she was over their quarrel. So one day it occurred to her that he might happen to get one of the very shirts she was working on, without knowing who had made it. This put an idea into her head and when the shirt was finished she sewed a little pocket on it and put a note inside begging him to come back to her when the war was over. She signed her first name only so that no one else could tell whom it was from and sent it off, with dozens of other shirts, to the front. Then she waited for days and days, saying a little prayer once in a while that the message might reach her lover. And sure enough, it did! The note was found and, seeing the address, some one took the trouble to see that he actually got that shirt and found the note inside the pocket. As soon as he could, he came back on furlough and then everything was all right.

At the end, Nora, who liked love stories that

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turned out happily, was delighted, but Bébée seemed thoughtful.

“Do you suppose such a thing could happen?” she asked.

“It might,” answered Nora, and nothing more was said of the matter for the time.

Next morning while they were working with the “Busy Bees,” filling housewives with needles, and buttons and spools of thread, to be sent to the front, Bébée suddenly turned to Nora.

“Who are these for, Nonie?” she asked in an undertone, so that no one else should hear her.

“For the soldiers,” Nora replied, surprised.

“Yes, I thought so,” Bébée remarked hesitatingly, “but are they for the Boys in Gray or the Yankee traitors to their State?” She said the words as if she were repeating something she had learned by heart.

“Now whoever told you such a thing as that?” demanded Nora, much scandalized. “’T is for the Union soldiers they are, of course. The Yankees are not traitors. They are fine, brave men fighting for their country’s liberty.”

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"Are you certain of that?" questioned Bébée anxiously, looking much puzzled. "Indeed, Nonie, I think you must be mistaken."

"To be sure I 'm certain," declared Nora, with great positiveness, "there 's no chance of mistake at all." And there the talk ended.

Bébée seemed much preoccupied for the next day or two, and then early one morning Nora opened her eyes to find the child staring at the ceiling as if she had been awake for a long time.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked sleepily.

"I want to learn to read and write," answered Bébée earnestly. "I want to go to school as soon as I can."

Nora gave a little cry of delight and threw her arms about the child.

"Oh, I 'm so glad," she exclaimed. "I was just hatin' to think of your growin' up ignorant, an' Bébée, Mam'selle and I can teach you till we go home—but what made you change your mind, dear?"

"There 's something I must do," the little girl answered quietly. "Some day, Nonie dear, I 'll

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tell you all about it, but just now, please, I'd rather not," and she hugged Nora to show that it was not lack of love that forced her to withhold her confidence.

And so it happened that one of the very first things they did upon their return to New York was to settle Bébée in a private school for younger children, where she found to her great delight that, as Nora had predicted, the girls were not in the least "horrid"; but she attributed this to the fact that none of them knew her, and she took good care not to inform any one that she had any other name than O'Neil.

Mr. O'Neil was still in Washington, and Bébée printed her first letter to Uncle Tim. The pride she took in that accomplishment astonished Nora when she thought how indifferent the child had been only a few months before. It was apparent that she was very much in earnest in her desire to learn, and Nora puzzled her head more than once over the cause.

"Who could she be wantin' to write letters to?" Nora asked herself, but had no answer ready.

CHAPTER XVI

A LETTER WITH A COAT OF ARMS

ONE morning as the girls came into the dining-room, Bébée ran ahead to their table, intent upon the letters, in which she had developed a great interest since she had begun to write herself.

"Here's one for Uncle Tim!" she exclaimed, balancing it on her hand.

"It will catch the Southern mail if we send it at once," said the practical Nora.

"And what's this?" asked Bébée, pointing to a coat of arms that was engraved on the back.

Nora took the letter and glanced at it.

"Oh, 't is from Lady Castleton," she explained. "It has an English stamp."

"But it is *this*, I want to know about," Bébée insisted, indicating the design on the other side.

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"I don't know what it is," answered Nora indifferently. "Perhaps 't is an advertisement."

Bébée shook her head emphatically.

"No, it is n't," she protested, "'cause I had a picture just like it once. It had the same three little lions sticking out their tongues—"

"We 'll send it to Daddy and ask him," Nora cut in. "It's rather pretty when you come to look at it."

A few days later an answer came from Mr. O'Neil with an explanation.

"It's called a coat of arms," he wrote, "and only the quality in the old country have them on their letters. This must belong to some of Lady Castleton's family. She writes that Bébée's chain, the one that was around the dog's neck with the ring, has been sent to her by mistake from Tiffany's with her own things, and she 'll bring it back when she comes herself, not liking to trust it with these new-fangled express companies."

"I 'm glad the chain is safe!" exclaimed Bébée.

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"I'm very fond of it for it brings back such pleasant memories."

"I'm glad, too," replied Nora, "and, you see, dear, you must have been mistaken about the coat of arms. You could n't have had a thing that belonged to Lady Castleton. You've never even seen her."

"But I could n't be mistaken, Nonie dear. It was inside the clasp of my chain, you know."

"But it belongs to Lady Castleton," repeated Nora. "What have you to do with her?" Even as she asked the question a possible answer came into her head and she drew her breath with a sharp catch. "Never mind," she added hastily, "we must hurry or we'll be late for school," and the subject was not referred to again till long afterward.

Mr. O'Neil returned to New York early in December, very full of the Union successes at Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain, but very careful not to mention the war before Bébée. He was at once drawn into preparations for Christmas, which were elaborate and exciting.

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Hardly a day passed that one or the other of the girls did not think of some surprise for Uncle Tim, and when they had a minute to spare, each was off by herself, working madly on a gift for the other.

"I have thought of a lovely present for Daddy," Nora whispered in Bébée's ear rather breathlessly.

"Nonie," said Bébée, severely, "how many times have I told you to say 'papa'? If Uncle Tim was an old darky then you might call him 'Daddy,' but it is n't polite English."

"To be sure, dearie," answered Nora, who always accepted such corrections calmly and was quite proud of Bébée's superiority. "I do be forgettin' now and then, I mean, I forget, but it's all one. What I want to tell you is that I've thought of a lovely present for Da—papa."

"What is it?" asked Bébée, interestedly.

"It's one of these new photograph albums. They are very fashionable and I saw a beautiful one the other day in a store window. 'T was purple morocco with a silver clasp."

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"Do you think he would like it?" asked Bébée a little doubtfully.

"I 'm sure he would," Nora asserted, "that is, if we had a picture taken to put in it."

Bébée clapped her hands in delight.

"He 'd love it!" she cried excitedly. "Let 's have it taken to-day!"

"We 'll go this afternoon to make an appointment," Nora said.

After dinner they set out for Gurney's Daguerrean Saloon where photographs on paper were taken, this being a new process then fast superseding the more expensive daguerreotypes.

They had to wait, for it was a fine, clear day and a great many sitters were ahead of them; but they spent their time very pleasantly, looking over the wonderful array of portraits that lined the walls.

At last their turn came, and they explained to the operator that they had stopped to make an appointment.

He however urged them to have the picture done at once because the light that day was so

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fine that he was sure of a successful result. There was some demur on Mam'selle's part, who said they were in their everyday clothes while she had planned to have them more elaborately dressed. But it was explained that the blue moiré which Nora had wished Bébée to wear would not take successfully, so she was prevailed upon to let them sit at once.

They went into a little dressing-room and smoothed their hair and then the operation was begun.

They were posed before a painted background, Nora on a rustic seat and Bébée standing beside her with a basket of artificial flowers in her hand. Then hard metal clasps were adjusted to hold their heads steady while the photograph was being made.

"Now look pleasant while I count thirty," said the man, and Bébée answered mournfully.

"How can I look pleasant with my head in hand-cuffs," which remark had the effect of making Nora look *too* pleasant, for she snickered out loud.

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There was a good deal of laughter over the taking of this picture but it was done at last, the operator evidently being quite used to people acting foolishly while he was making pictures of them.

"Now I'll take you separately," he suggested, when the group was finished to his satisfaction.

"What for?" inquired Nora, who could n't think of herself without Bébée and saw no reason for separate pictures.

"Well, you know," the operator explained, "'most every one needs a few little pictures to send off to their friends in the army. And we keep a number of men at the front. Before a battle there is always a rush to have pictures taken to send home."

"We have n't any one in the army to send them to," declared Nora, and the matter would have ended there, had not Bébée, grown very thoughtful since individual portraits had been proposed, added her plea.

"Yes, let's, Nonie," she begged earnestly. "I—I think I'd like to have mine taken."

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Nora looked at her in surprise, just a little hurt.

"I don't see why," she protested; "we 're always together, are n't we?"

"But the girls at school might like them," Bébée suggested, "and, oh, yes," she brightened as this thought came to her, "Uncle Tim would love to have one of you to carry in his waist-coat-pocket."

"To be sure he would," agreed Nora, always ready to do anything that might please her father, "we 'll each have one taken and he 'll find a picture of one of his girls no matter which pocket he puts a hand into."

But Nora was not deceived. She understood that Bébée wanted a portrait of herself alone, though why she could n't guess.

Happily, the photographs were very successful, which was not always the case in those days, but they looked "so lonesome" in the album, as Bébée put it, that the two girls bought portraits of all the notable people of the time to fill it up. Still there were many empty places, so rather in de-

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spair, they went to Mr. Barnum's Museum,¹ near the Astor House, and procured pictures of all the freaks.

Hanging the stockings on Christmas Eve was a matter of much joy and mystery, but Nora was by no means satisfied with the accommodations.

"In my own little house that Daddy says I'm to have when the war is over," she explained to Bébée, "there'll be a great wide fireplace with hooks on each side to hang things."

"Yes, indeed," said Bébée, as some memory stirred within her. "Yes, and the boys must bring in the Yule Log and put it on the fiah and stan' around looking mighty uneasy all the time, while

¹ A man who once asked Mr. Barnum for work was given five bricks and told to place four of them at various conspicuous places on Broadway. Then he was to return and enter the Museum with the last one. Thereafter he was kept on a constant round, exchanging brick for brick, always bringing one back to the Museum. He soon was followed by hordes of people who bought tickets to find out what happened to that odd brick. Finally the police asked Mr. Barnum "to call off his brick-man," because the streets had become blocked with people.

The country people were so intent upon seeing Barnum's Museum that they went there carrying their carpet bags before they sought out their hotels.—E. B. K.

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ole Uncle Mose gets theih eggnog, and saying, 'Chris'mas gif', little Missy,' 'Chris'mas gif', Marse De—.'” She broke off suddenly, looking at Nora a little fearfully, but that wise young lady took no notice though her heart beat anxiously, as she realized that her darling had forgotten herself for a moment and had gone back into her past.

“We'll fasten up some holly here,” she announced briskly, and proceeded to put that suggestion into immediate effect, successfully diverting Bébée from her reminiscent mood.

They hung their own stockings and arranged their gifts for each other with great secrecy, but in their bedroom they had another stocking, much too big to belong to either of them, over which they giggled continuously as they filled it.

“He'll be thinkin' Santy did it all when he sees that jumpin'-jack,” chuckled Nora, “for 't is only toys that old saint has in his pack. He takes small account of grown-ups.”

“'T was that made me afraid he'd forget Uncle Tim,” said Bébée, with a jolly wriggle of

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excitement, and then, more soberly, "But I don't want him to think it was Santa Claus made the beaded watch-pocket.—You see, Uncle Tim gives me money and—and—oh, everything, and I'm afraid he might think I was mighty mean if I never did anything for him."

Nora kissed her enthusiastically.

"Don't be worrying your little head about that," she said. "I'll tell him, and you may be sure he'll value it more because you made it than if you'd bought him all the di'mon's in Tiffany's."

Their Christmas was a great success and Mr. O'Neil was surprised and delighted, just as they had hoped he would be, but the album seemed to tickle his fancy most, though the girls never quite understood why he always laughed so heartily when he looked at it.

"Why is it so funny, Papa?" Nora asked.

"'T is just on account of the notions it puts into me head," Mr. O'Neil chuckled. "Sure, all me frien's is here, I've but to turn the leaves to see President Lincoln and Queen Victori' and 'The-

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What-is it?' and General Grant and the Snake Charmer and Clara Louise Kellogg and Major Tom Thumb and—ah, 't is a fine conglomeration of notables to be havin' in the same box."

The Christmas holiday passed quickly and soon the girls were back at school and their lives ran on smoothly with little to break the monotony until early spring when preparations for the great Metropolitan Fair were begun.

It was called the Sanitary Fair by most people, because it was held for the benefit of the Sanitary Commission of the Northern Army. Such fairs had been popular throughout the Union and had raised huge sums of money. New York planned to make theirs larger than any that had preceded it. Enthusiasm was aroused in all classes, and every one contributed in one way or another to its success.

What interested Nora most, was the special children's department in which both public and private schools had been asked to take part. For several months before it opened there was

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scarcely a child in the city who was not busy with some work for it.

The day of the opening was declared a public holiday and all the stores closed in the morning. In the afternoon there was a monster parade of regulars, volunteers, and militia who were reviewed by Generals Dix and Sandford, and later by the mayor. General Anderson, the hero of Fort Sumter, was seated in a Broadway window and, as the negro troops passed him, their colors were lowered in a salute in his honor.

Broadway and Union Park were crowded to suffocation and many a fine crinoline was wrecked in the press.

At eight o'clock the Fair was formally opened and of course both Bébée and Nora were there with Mr. O'Neil and Mam'selle. They were so sleepy when they returned that they scarcely knew when they got into bed.

The next morning at breakfast they were discussing among other things, the songs that had been sung and Nora expressed her preference for the Army Hymn.

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Bébée shook her head emphatically.

"I liked Old Hundred best," she said with a smile, "'cause it was the last."

Mr. O'Neil laughed heartily.

"You're right, Bébée, me dear," he chuckled. "'T was too long, and that's a fact."

Which was true, no doubt, but once the Fair was opened there was plenty of fun and plenty of work for everybody.

Mr. O'Neil had provided season tickets for all, and both the girls were attached to Booth Number 10, which was the private school booth, so they were free to come and go. Practically they lived at the Fair except when they were at school or asleep.

Mam'selle insisted, very sensibly, that they should eat their dinner at the Astor House, saying, "Zen zey not so crazy for ze tr-rash," and Mr. O'Neil agreed with her. But, after they had eaten, no restraint was put upon them, though Nora, in her motherly fashion, now and then denied herself things she felt Bébée would be better without.

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The Fair¹ was really a mammoth undertaking, extending under various roofs from the neighborhood of Seventh Avenue as far as the North Side of Union Square and from Fourteenth to Fifteenth Streets. In these buildings were collected thousands of objects either for sale or for exhibition, so varied that it would be hard to ask for anything that could not be supplied, from a painting by Meissonier to the blood-stained uniform of Ellsworth of the New York Fire Zouaves, the first man to die for the Union; soap or a sewing-machine; wax flowers or real blossoms; love-birds or prize turkeys; China tea or petticoats; Parisian dolls or race horses; plows, diamonds, and hundreds of other things, all displayed under great festoons of flags and greenery, in one grand collection of the luxuries and necessities from nearly all the countries on the face of the earth. Small wonder if the children and grown-ups, too, found the Fair a continual delight.

¹ The profits from the Metropolitan Fair amounted to one million dollars; a much more notable sum in those days than in these.—
E. B. K.

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It was a funny store, for nearly every one was both buying and selling, so that by the beginning of the second week there were bare spots in some of the tables where the things which had been sold had been taken away. Such was the case at Booth Number 10, and Nora was asked to assist in rearranging it. She in turn called upon Mam'selle to help with her French deftness, so that Bébée, who had nothing in particular to do, wandered off to see the Indians whose wigwams had aroused her curiosity.

She strolled along, looking to right and left, and stopping to buy a horn of candy with a picture of a beautiful lady pasted upon it, or to examine a smoking-cap which she thought might do for Uncle Tim, "if I could only persuade him to enjoy it," as she said to herself hopefully; till finally she paused at the entrance of a place she had never visited.

She peeped through the door with some curiosity. It was a quaint room with an uncarpeted floor, a broad chimney-piece, plain deal dressers, old-fashioned chairs and tables, upon which were



“Mammy’ll be right heah”

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placed odd bits of old china. The attendants, dressed in costumes of long ago, looked strange to the child, but the servants were all colored and the great fireplace had a homelike air that attracted her.

"Thank fortune, the rush hour's over," she heard one lady say to another. "We'll have time to rest now. I verily believe our Knickerbocker Kitchen is the success of the fair. Girls," she continued, raising her voice, "you may go now for a while. Mandy can send one of the boys after us if a crowd comes in early for tea."

There was a general rush for the door and a chorus of delighted exclamations as the girls, in their pretty costumes, left the old kitchen.

The older lady, evidently in authority, loitered a moment and spoke to some one who half rose from a high-backed chair beside the fire.

"You'll let us know, Mandy?" she said.

"Yes, Mistiss, Mammy'll be right heah," and then there was silence; but at the sound of the voice Bébé jumped as if she had received a shock.

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The back of the chair was turned to her, and great folds of flowered chintz on either side were all that indicated that it had an occupant, but Bébée drew near to it on tiptoe, trembling with excitement.

Beside it she hesitated and put her hand to her breast.

“Mammy!” she whispered softly. “Mammy,” and there was a sob of yearning in her voice.

“Who’s dat callin’ ‘Mammy’?” cried the old darky woman, straightening in her chair. “Who’s a-callin’ me?”

“Oh, Mammy!” cried Bébée, and flung herself into the arms outstretched to her, tears running down her cheeks, and her body shaking with sobs.

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE KNICKERBOCKER KITCHEN

THE old darky woman folded Bébée in her ample embrace and sat rocking back and forth, petting and soothing her as she might a little baby.

“Theah, theah, honey, I’s you’ ole mammy come back again. My, what a powerful long time it has been! Mammy thought sometimes her ole heart would bust wantin’ to see her baby.”

Bébée hugged her tighter and clung to the huge woman almost desperately.

“It’s all right, honey,” Mammy went on, still rocking back and forth. “Nothin’ is goin’ to happen to you-all while I’m heah. Look up into you’ mammy’s face and let her see how you’ve been growin’ this long while.”

But Bébée buried her head deeper, still sobbing.

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"Land sakes, honey," whispered Mammy, "if you is goin' to be so sobby when you sees you' mammy, 'pears like she'd betta' go away again."

Still Bébée's only answer was a tightening of the arms.

"Don't you-all want to hear what 's been a-happenin' to you' mammy?" was the next question.

Bébée nodded her head.

"Well, then, you jes' stop this scandalous actin'. Might think you was a worthless pickaninny with no raisin' to speak of, 'stead of my own lamb. Come, honey, it 's all you' ole mammy can do to keep her ownse'f togetheh while you is a-cryin' this a-way; for the Lord, he knows I've been a-wishin' you in these ole arms every night and mornin' since I see you last, but we must n't have no foolishness heah, honey, 'cause I ain't ready to have no changes yet."

Bébée now lifted up her head.

"Where have you been all this time?" she asked. "They told me you said for me not to worry."

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"That 's right, honey," said Mammy, rather mournfully. "I tole a young Irish boy to tell you that; right pert and sassy he was, but he said you was all right and in good hands and—and, well, I could a-hugged that boy, sassy or no. Yes'm, I tole him to tell you what he did, I was that happy."

"You were n't happy to be rid of me, Mammy?" cried Bébée, on the verge of another outburst of tears.

"Well, not quite the way you's meanin'," answered Mammy, "but lemme tell you how it happened, so 's you'll understand. You see, when those pesterin' boys took after you that-a-way, I would a-liked to run after you, too; but you know, honey, I ain't what you'd call a sprinteh, so I jes' sat down to catch ma bref, then along comes some of that white trash, and they says, referrin' to me, 'Le's hang her.'"

"But they did n't hang you, did they, Mammy?" gasped Bébée.

"'Course they did n't," she answered soothingly. "Ain't I heah now, holdin' you jes' like I

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used to befohe all this trouble done come? No, they said that, and I laughed. 'Whehe you all going to hang me?' I asked 'em. 'I don't mind hangin', but I's mighty particular how you all does it.'

" 'Oh, don' you worry about that,' says one of 'em, a sort of a leader he was, 'don' you worry. A lamp-pos' will do all right.'

" 'Well,' says I, kind of cheerful, 'a lamp-pos' looks good, but whehe 's you' rope? I ain't goin' to walk to that lamp-pos' on no fool's ehhand,' I says, 'and there ain't none of you fitten to cahhy me.'

" 'Here 's the rope,' says a man, and then I busts right out laughin'.

" 'What you laughin' at? At me?' he says kind of fierce and lookin' like he 's ready to spit fiah.

" 'Land sakes, no! mistah gem'men,' I says in a hurry. 'I 's laughin' at that rope, seh. That rope would n't hole up a good day's washin', let alone a fat ole niggeh like me. I don't want to be hiked way up theah jes' to fall down again,'

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I says. 'If you don' take care you 's mighty apt to hurt me.'

"Well, they all laughed fit to bust themselves, as I was hopin' they would, all 'ceptin' that leader feller, and he got kind of mad and sassed 'em for a minute or two, then he turns back and says, 'Come on and string her up!' 'Do it youhse'f,' they says, and laughs hearty.

"Well, you know, honey, there is n't no *one* man born that can hang youh mammy, and that leader fellah knows that too and, though he blusters a lot, he ain't makin' no attempt to tie me up to that lamp-pos' hisse'f and the others jes' won't help him, but stands laughin'. I don't know but maybe they 'd a-been there yet, 'ceptin' a crowd of boys comes a-runnin' along, shoutin' that the police is a-comin', and the first thing I knows I was all alone on that dooh-step and feelin' powerful lonesome."

"I was lonesome, too," said Bébée with a gulp.

"'Cou'se you was," said Mammy, patting her.

"Well, what happened next?" asked Bébée.

"I was still settin' on that dooh-step when the

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dooh behind me opened and a white woman looked out. 'Hurry in,' she says. 'They 'll come back and you won't get off twicet in the same way.' So, thinkin' I would n't be no use to you-all if I was hangin' to a lamp-pos', I slipped inside. I 've been theah ever since. She 's a good, German sort of a lady. Not quality folks, you un'stand. She 's all alone, her husband bein' at the war, and I rent a room f'om her, with the use of the yard foh ma washin'."

"And did n't you ever care what became of me?" asked Bébée with a choke in her voice.

Mammy hugged her to her ample bosom.

"Ah, honey dear, you' ole mammy was 'most crazy, but I could n't find a trace of you till that Irish boy done come up to me on the street that a-way. Since that I 've had my eye on you, and I 've seen you drivin' 'round, though you-all never noticed me."

"But why did n't you come to me?" demanded Bébée. "You could stay at the hotel and—and—"

"No, honey," mammy interrupted. "Mammy's

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baby 's got to be sensible. You-all is happy, is n't you?"

"Oh, yes," answered Bébée, "but I want you. I have n't anybody else that 's my own and—and, oh, Mammy," she hesitated and looked about her with a startled look on her face, "I 've seen him again," she whispered.

Mammy seemed to know at once to whom Bébée referred, for she nodded her head.

"He was theah the night of those riots, honey," she answered slowly. "That 's why I ain't never come to see you, my lamb, though it most broke you' ole mammy's heart."

Bébée looked at her, perplexed.

"I don't understand," she said.

"Well, it's this-a-way," Mammy explained. "You's a heap better pertected now than if you was with you' fat ole mammy. That 's what I 've been a-thinkin', honey. You's got a good home and fine clo'es and is gettin' a' education like a little lady ought to. And—"

"But I want *you*, Mammy," Bébée broke in.

"Now you be reasonable, honey," Mammy an-

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swered persuasively. "You stay whehe you is and I 'll stay whehe I is."

"I 'm not reasonable," Bébée retorted. "You are mine and I order you to come with me."

Mammy chuckled to herself till her great fat sides shook with suppressed laughter.

"Up No'th us niggers is all free," she answered with a grin. "We-all is jes' as bad off as poor white trash what don't belong to nobody. And when we 's hungry or thirsty—why, we can stay hungry or thirsty so far as anybody cares. But 't ain't that, honey, I 'm thinkin' of, an' you knows it without my tellin' you. I 's you' ole mammy jes' so long as the good Lord lets me stay hehe, but I can't take care of my baby like she ought to be cared for. *Now* you rides in youh carriage, but with mammy, you 'd be walkin' in the mud; so you must promise you won't go and spoil it all by tellin' you seen me."

"But can't you come and live with us?" demanded Bébée. "Uncle Tim would take care of you. 'Deed he would."

"Maybe! Maybe!" answered Mammy, nodding

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her head up and down slowly, "but it would n't be in nature for him not to be askin' questions as to where we-all came f'om and what 's ouah names and—'t is n't hard to guess what would happen then, honey."

Bébée nodded in agreement with this. She had reasoned this out by herself and kept silent, so that Mammy's words only confirmed her own judgment.

"But, Mammy," she asked falteringly, "is n't there any way I could see you now and then?"

"Ain't you happy where you is?" demanded Mammy.

"Oh, yes," answered Bébée readily, "I love Uncle Tim and Nonie. And they love me too, I 'm sure,—but *you're* my mammy." Bébée emphasized the words as if nothing further need be said. And it was understood by the old darky woman, who nodded her agreement.

"Well, honey, I 's not denyin' I certainly would like to see you," she said half to herself. "Jes' to know you was all right, 'cause I do have ma worryin' spells and no mistake. Seems like I jes' con-

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jure up things to pester myself with sometimes. Honey," she broke off suddenly, leaning over and whispering in Bébée's ear. "Do you-all think you could keep a straight face and not 'pear to know your mammy if she was talkin' to these O'Neil folks?"

"Yes, if you wanted me to," answered Bébée.

"Well, honey," Mammy went on, unfolding her scheme, "you 've seen the signs like that one oveh thehe about tellin' fortunes, hey? I can't read jes' rightly what they say, but folks pay money for it, two bits for a fortune."

"Oh!" exclaimed Bébée. "I see what you mean. You want Uncle Tim and Nora to have their fortunes told, so that you can talk to them."

"My heart, but you's the clevah baby," said Mammy, admiringly, "but is you sure you can pretend you never seen me before?"

"Yes," said Bébée, "I think I can."

"Then you bring 'em here, and I'll see if I can't fix it so as we all can see each othel now and then. Run away now, and come strollin' in 'long about tea-time."

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With a parting hug Bébée ran off, overjoyed that she had seen her old mammy again and confident that the old darky woman would find some way to insure future meetings.

CHAPTER XVIII

TEA-LEAVES AND PROPHECIES

BEBEE had no difficulty in carrying out Mammy's plan. She found Mr. O'Neil at the booth with Nora, who had just finished with her task. And as she was in the habit of going around the Fair alone there were no questions asked as to where she had been. The three wandered about together, Mr. O'Neil buying nearly all the things that were offered to him, for he professed the belief that it was his duty to spend all he could, considering that the cruel war was making him as he said, "Too rich for comfort."

About an hour later Bébée stopped them near the Knickerbocker Kitchen.

"Have you ever been in there?" she asked innocently.

"We have not," said Mr. O'Neil, "and faith,

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't is awful empty I feel. What do ye say, girls, to a cup of tea and maybe a doughnut?"

Nora hailed this suggestion with delight and soon they were seated at the table near a crowd of other thirsty people.

Bébée looked around and saw nothing of Mammy and her heart misgave her. Perhaps, after all, she would n't see the old darky again. The changes in her life came so swiftly and unexpectedly that she could hardly count upon anything happening as it was planned. However, she called Nora's attention to the signs telling of fortunes being read and that young lady promptly appealed to her father.

"Sure, Daddy, I must have me fortune told. I'm particular to know what 's goin' to happen."

"Of course," said Mr. O'Neil, looking up inquiringly at the young colored waitress.

"I don't tell fortunes, sir," she said politely. "I don't know nothin' about conjurin', but we've got a mighty wise ole woman that does, and I'll call her, sir." And off she went.

" 'T is a homey sort of place," said Mr. O'Neil,

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leaning back in his chair and looking about him contentedly.

He was facing a door that led into the kitchens and Bébée, too, could see it, but Nora, on the opposite side of the table, had her back to it. She was a little startled, then, to see her father suddenly stiffen in his seat, fixing his gaze on something behind her, and then turn and look intently at Bébée. Nora, extremely sensitive to anything that might concern the child, turned, too, and looked back.

Coming toward them, in rustling, stiffly starched skirts, was an immense old darky woman, her head bound in a gay bandana, and a white kerchief at her throat throwing into strong relief her kindly, black face.

Instantly the same thought that had come into Mr. O'Neil's mind brought Nora's head around to face Bébée, but if either of them expected anything from the child they were mistaken. Bébée looked at the old negress calmly, with a half smile on her face, but no sign of recognition.

With a long intake of breath, Nora leaned back

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in her chair, and Mr. O'Neil too seemed less disturbed. Each thought that if this had been Bébée's mammy the child would have run to her on sight.

Nora looked around again and all three watched the huge old darky woman make her way slowly and with much dignity toward their table. Her hands were folded across her ample waistline and as she passed between the tables she smiled benignly at the people seated at them as a great lady might upon her distinguished guests. Nearly every one in the room turned to look at her, whispering to one another with a smile and a nod in her direction but there was an inherent self-respect about the old colored woman that made laughing at her quite out of the question.

She bobbed politely to each in turn as she reached them, but, though Nora and Mr. O'Neil looked for a show of surprise or recognition when she saw Bébée, no sign escaped her.

"You all 'scuse me, please, if I set down," she began in a melodious voice, and with a great rustling, she subsided into the chair the waitress had

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provided for her. Then a small tray with the usual tea-pot, several cups, a pot of boiling water and a tiny red lacquered tea-caddy were placed on the table.

“And now which young missy wants to know her fortune?” asked the old woman, turning to them with an inviting smile.

There was an argument over this, till at length Bébée protested positively that she did n’t wish hers told at all, and Nora signified her willingness to comply. In fact, she wanted hers told, hoping that something might be said that would ease her anxieties about Bébée.

“Then you brew the tea, honey,” said Mammy to Nora.

“But we have plenty here,” Nora replied in surprise, as she touched the tea-pot on the table.

“But *you* did n’t make it, honey,” said the old woman showing her white teeth. “That makes a heap of difference, I ’m tellin’ you.”

“How much shall I use?” asked Nora, beginning to make her preparations.

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"You must 'cide that for yourself," answered Mammy.

Nora drew the pot toward her and lifted the lid, letting out a puff of steam. Then she looked at the quantity of water and threw in some tea-leaves hastily. The old woman nodded approval.

"Now, missy, you must wish one secret wish," she said impressively, "but it must be the wish of your heart, and I 'll tell you will it come true or no."

"You 'd better be whisperin' it into your Daddy's ear, Nonie," said her father. "'T will be surer comin' true than a secret 'twixt you and the teapot."

"They 's some things, seh, she might wish, that even her father could n't get for her," muttered the old negress.

Nora looked at her quickly. It seemed as if her thoughts had been read in some mysterious way, for she had wished that Bébée's relatives might never be found. It was in truth her dearest wish just then.

"Now then," said Mammy, "you jes' pour some

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of this new tea into this here cup. Not too much," she added hastily, as Nora started to obey with eager generosity. "Now tas'e it," she ended.

Nora complied by sipping it.

"Is it bitteh?" asked Mammy.

"No, it 's nice," answered Nora.

"Stir three times to the right," was the next order, as Mammy handed her a spoon.

So serious was the old negress that, in spite of themselves, all leaned over the cup to see what would happen, and floating up from the bottom came two tea-leaves which, at first far apart, seemed to rush toward each other and embrace, while they watched.

Meanwhile Mammy was crooning unintelligible words to herself that made a low murmur. As the tea-leaves came together she gave a happy little chuckle.

"Now if you was a little older, honey," she said, addressing Nora, "I might be suspicionin' a lover for you, but 't aint that nohow. It 's a little lady."

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"Now how do you make that out?" demanded Mr. O'Neil, bending over the cup.

"Why can't you see, seh," answered Mammy; "can't you see they bofe has skirts?"

"Do you mean the little frills around the leaves?" asked Mr. O'Neil with a smile.

"Sure! They's little ladies," Mammy vowed, and then went on with her fortune-telling.

"Stir again," she commanded, "only this time it must be the otheh way."

Nora did as she was told, but the two leaves still stayed together.

Again the old darky woman chuckled as if what she saw pleased her mightily.

"Good! Good!" she exclaimed, "they's fast frien's. Youh luck is certainly tied up togetheh, 'ceptin' some one comes to separate you. You stir the cup, seh," went on Mammy, turning to Mr. O'Neil.

"I've no wish to part 'em," he said with a shake of his head. "'Tis the last thing I'd do!"

"It ain't what you's wishin', seh," said Mammy,

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"it's whether you can or no. Try it, seh, if you please."

Mr. O'Neil took the spoon and stirred the tea. The two leaves whirled around together. Again he tried, this time more violently, almost as if he wished to separate them, and then, reluctantly, they slowly floated apart.

Nora gave a little cry of dismay and dropped her spoon in the cup, when instantly the leaves came together again.

"Oh, see!" she cried delightedly, "they are hugging each other. Even you can't separate them, Daddy."

"They ain't meanin' to be away from each otheh for long, nohow," said the old darky. "They certainly is frien's, those two,—but I don't like the look of that," she commented, bending over the cup, and pointing to an angular stick that had suddenly come to the surface and seemed to be hovering menacingly over the two lady-leaves.

"It certainly am a bad man. Stir it again, honey."

Nora did as she was told and now one of the

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leaves separated from the other and seemed deliberately to cast itself in the way of the bad stick. A disaster seemed imminent when the old woman suddenly stuck her black finger into the cup. Immediately all confusion stopped, the two friends came hurrying together, and the angular stick sank to the bottom.

It was all very real indeed, when everything was forgotten but the cup and while the old negress chanted her soothing, mysterious sort of song.

"Now what's that all about?" demanded Mr. O'Neil, impressed by Mammy's evident satisfaction at the result.

"Wait till we try this cup, sir," she said, "then I'll tell you."

She held out a second cup for Nora to fill with tea.

"Now stir," she commanded, but she looked at the result with a dissatisfied eye.

"Try again," she said at last.

But again the result gave her no satisfaction. She poured off the tea from the leaves lying on the bottom of the cup and studied them carefully.

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At length she spoke to Nora.

"I can't help it, though I 've tried; it 's come out that way and it 's bound to be true. You 've got a frien', young missy, an' you thinks you love her, and you does. You 'll never be separated from her foh long, 'ceptin' 't is by a bad man that you must look out foh. He 'll have a long nose and a' evil face. Watch out foh him, and for a letteh. I certainly see danger in the letteh, though what it is I can't read nohow—and I 's sorry to tell you you won't get your wish."

"Oh, don't say that!" cried Nora. "I just must have it."

"Sometimes, honey," said the old darky woman solemnly, "you gets betteh than what you was wishin' to have. I don't see nothin' very bad comin' to you, and you said that you' sip of the cup of life did n't tas'e bitteh nohow. You all will live long and be happy, and I certainly do wish you well, honey, for the sake of the kind heart shinin' out of youh eyes."

It seemed to Mr. O'Neil that there was more real feeling in the old woman's words than would



"I'se sorry to tell you, you won't get your wish"

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be expected from a darky fortune-teller who had never seen them before and who, in all likelihood, never expected to see them again. And once more a suspicion came into his mind and he looked at Bébée out of the corner of his eye. There was nothing, however, to confirm his thought, and the old woman was about to leave them, her fortune-telling being over, when she stopped and said:

“If you ’ll ’scuse me, seh,” she said, “I ’se been wonderin’ if you all did n’t want a fine washeh and ihoner? Seein’ your two daughters, seh, and knowin’ how many pretty dresses they mus’ have. I ’d take special pains doin’ them, seh, and there ain’t nobody in this here town can flute ruffles better than me, if I do say so.”

“But don’t you tell fortunes for a living?” asked Nora in surprise.

“Now, missy, you would n’t ’spect a great, big woman like me to get enough to feed her tellin’ fortunes, would you?” She laughed heartily, throwing back her head. “No, no, missy, the Faih will soon be over and that ’s the end of my

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fortune-tellin'. I's a clear-starcher by pufession, and I certainly would like to have youh work to do."

"Oh, Nonie, let's have her!" exclaimed Bébée eagerly. "You know our washwoman tears things to pieces."

"We can try her," said Nora. "You can come for the wash on Monday?"

"Yes, missy," said the old woman beaming upon her. "Thank you kindly, I'll be 'round on Monday. The Faih will be closed by then."

She lifted herself out of her chair with an effort and was about to go away.

"Just a minute, please," said Mr. O'Neil. "Were you in New York during the riots?"

"Why, yes, seh," answered Mammy looking surprised.

"Where were you living?" asked Mr. O'Neil.

"I have a room with a German lady," answered Mammy. "It's 'way up town but I have a nice grass-plat where I can sun-bleach. You know, seh, there's nothin' like the sun to bleach and—"

"Did ye ever hear of any colored people who

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were hurt in those riots?" Mr. O'Neil interrupted.

"Why, yes, seh, I certainly did, seh," she answered readily. "There was a heap of 'em badgered, and one ole woman, a big woman she was, as big as me, seh, and that 's pretty big," she stopped to smile broadly, "she was chased by a crowd that was threatenin' to hang her. I don't know, seh, whehe they thought that ole woman went to."

Into both Nora's and Mr. O'Neil's minds came the same idea. "There is another one."

Aloud Mr. O'Neil said,

"By the way, what is your name?"

"Well, seh, I'se got considerable name," Mammy said after a moment. "You know, down Souf, we-all is mighty proud of ouh names. I'se christened Geo'gia, No'th Ca'olina, Alabama, 'Ouisiana, Mandlebaum, but I'se called Mandy for short."

Mr. O'Neil pushed back his chair with a laugh and they all rose.

"Here, Mandy," he said, taking a bill out of

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his pocket and giving it to the old woman, "this will pay for the tea and fortune-telling and something over."

"Thank you, sir," said Mammy with a pleased bob.

"And we'll see you on Monday then," said Bébée, a little too anxiously, for Mr. O'Neil glanced at her sidewise.

"Yes, missy," answered the old darky with a broad grin, "on Monday."

That evening when Nora came to kiss her father good night, he pulled her down on his knees for a moment.

"Nora darlin', did you tell Mandy where to come for the wash?" he asked her.

Nora thought for a moment and then clasped her hands in consternation.

"Why, Daddy, I never did. I must tell her tomorrow."

"No, leave that to me, me dear," answered her father. "I don't think she's needin' to be told," he muttered to himself. "'T is very queer, this fortune-tellin', but it ain't no way hard when

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you have all the facts beforehand. I 'm thinkin' Mandy knows where we 're livin' all right, and no need to go out of me road to inform her."

It was no easy matter for Mr. O'Neil to make up his mind to test his suspicions that the old negro woman whom they had seen at the Knickerbocker Kitchen was Bébée's lost mammy. Nothing would have pleased him more than to discover for a certainty that the little girl who had come so strangely into their lives was without a relative in the world. He would have adopted her with a grateful heart, and rejoiced to have her for a sister for his darling Nora. Indeed he had grown very fond of the child himself and knew it would be a sad parting if it developed that Bébée must leave them. Moreover he dared not think of what the effect on Nora would be, after all these months of intimacy.

But Mr. O'Neil was an honest man, and he told himself that, no matter how indifferent Bébée's relatives seemed, he had no right to keep her if they wanted her and had lost her through some mischance resulting from the struggle between

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the North and South. Therefore he felt it his duty to test his suspicions, and see what the old darky woman would say.

Promptly on the following Monday Mammy came for the wash, stiffly starched and as neat as a new pin. She entered the parlor smiling and showing her fine white teeth, as she bobbed a ponderous courtesy to each in turn.

"It certainly am a lovely mornin', seh," she said, politely to Mr. O'Neil.

The two little girls were leading her into their room, going on ahead to show the way, when Mr. O'Neil stopped her at the door.

"Oh, by the way," he said, "your name is Mandy, is n't it?"

"Yes, seh," answered Mammy, still smiling, "Mandy foh short."

"Well, Mandy," Mr. O'Neil went on looking at her sharply, "how did it happen that ye knew where we lived? None of us told ye our address, yet here ye are. I'd like some explanation."

Mammy looked a little nervous and her smile vanished.

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"I see you suspicions me, Mr. O'Neil," she said softly. "Well, seh, I guess I'd bettah make a clean breas' of it, 'cause I don't hold none with deceptions, and my conscience has been kind o' busy prickin' me ever since I saw you-all. This is how it happened, seh, as true as I'm tellin' you."

She paused a moment and Mr. O'Neil braced himself for the revelation that had been hanging over him all these months that Bébée had been with them. He found himself saying "Poor Nonie!" and was on the point of stopping the old woman, but he had made up his mind that he ought to get at the truth for the child's sake.

"Go ahead," he commanded gruffly, and Mammy made her confession.

"I ain't the regular fortune-teller at the Fair, nohow," Mammy began abruptly. "I's jes' an old cul'lud washwoman, but you see, seh, eve'ybody at the Fair was a-talkin' about the rich Mistah O'Neil and his two little girls down to the Astor House, so, when I heared that you-all was a-lookin' for your fortunes, the regular conjure-

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woman bein' sick, I tells that worthless girl I'd do it, hopin' I might get your washin'."

Mandy looked so big and so honest and yet so penitent for what, to Mr. O'Neil, seemed a most trivial deception, that he brushed his suspicions aside with a glad heart.

"All right," he said, breaking in upon her profuse expressions of regret, "it's all right; so long as Miss Nora is satisfied, I'll be." And he dismissed Mandy with a curt nod.

There was no doubt that Bébée enjoyed seeing the old darky, and once or twice Nora noticed it, but she told herself that it was just the natural liking that Southern children had for colored people, and soon she herself grew to look forward to Mammy's regular visits almost as much as Bébée did.

That summer they spent at Saratoga where many rich and fashionable people went to drink the waters of the famous springs and to attend the races, just as if the armies of Lee and Grant were not at death grips in Virginia.

So long as Mr. O'Neil was there they enjoyed it

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hugely, but one day a letter in a blue envelope was found lying on the breakfast table and the children knew it was the usual signal for his departure.

Bébée, thinking that Nora would like a moment alone with her father before he left, went out on the porch of the hotel, intending to say good-by to Uncle Tim on his way to the train.

She seated herself in one of the big rocking-chairs, looking very small between its huge arms. She wished heartily that Mr. O'Neil was not going away. Her short life had seen many changes and, except when she had fallen in with Nora, none of them had been for the better. Mr. O'Neil seemed so strong to her that she always felt safe when he was near. She was sure that he would take good care of his own, and she belonged to him now. If only he could stay with them always! As this passed through her mind she heard the scrape of a chair being drawn up beside her and turning, looked into the eyes of the hawk-faced man she had seen at Stewart's long months before.

CHAPTER XIX

THE MYSTERIOUS MR. HITCHENS

WITH a sharp indrawing of her breath, Bébée jumped to her feet, ready to fly away from the man she seemed to fear.

“You ’d betteh not go till I ’ve had a talk with you,” he said, under his breath, with a distinct Southern drawl to his words. “If you are as wise as I think you are, you ’ll sit down and not make a scene.”

Bébée, with a helpless glance around her, subsided into the chair again.

“I see you know me,” the man went on.

“But I don’t know you!” Bébée interrupted.

“Well, you ’ve seen me before,” he declared.

“Yes,” said Bébée, “you are the man on the barrel, who told the crowd in New York that President Lincoln was going to give their work to the darkies, and made them burn the houses. I wish I had never seen you.”

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“Now that is n’t mannehs!” the man said with a smile, “but let me tell you at once that I don’t mean you any harm if—ah—if you do as you are told, that is.”

Again Bébée jumped to her feet, intending to run and warn Mr. O’Neil of this man’s presence. She must put all the people in the hotel on their guard at once. But the man had no intention of letting her escape. He was on his feet as soon as she and, grasping her by the arm, forced her back into her chair.

“Don’t be up to any tricks with me, my lady,” he said in a harsh undertone. “You and I are going to see a heap of each other, and don’t you fohget it. My name is Hitchens, understand. Mistah John Hitchens from Cleveland, Ohio. And that’s what you’ll tell people if any one asks you. We don’t talk about our Southehn blood up No’t’h, do we, hey?”

He stopped a minute as if expecting an answer but Bébée made none. She sat straight and rigid, her little heart doubling its beat.

“Now as I was telling you,” the man went on,

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"I'm not going to harm you any, if you do what I want; and that's very little."

"What is it?" asked Bébée, in so low a voice that the man could just hear it.

"I want a certain blue envelope that Mr. O'Neil received this morning," he answered softly. "That's all. Put it in my hands and you'll see the last of me for a long time."

"He'll give it to you if it is yours," suggested Bébée innocently.

"Never mind whose it is," the man growled in answer. "I mean you to get it for me, and mighty quick too. More than that, no one is to know you did it."

"You mean me to steal it?" exclaimed Bébée in absolute astonishment.

"Hush! Not so loud," cautioned Hitchens, glancing about uneasily.

"I don't care," Bébée went on recklessly. "I won't steal from Uncle Tim who is so good to me. I won't do it."

"Very well, then," growled the other. "But you know what to expect."

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"I won't steal the letter, no matter what you do," answered the child.

"And what do you think would happen if I whispered in Mr. O'Neil's ear just who and what you are, hey?" Hitchens went on. "Do you think they'd keep you with them a minute after they knew?"

"I don't believe Nonie would care," Bébée answered bravely, but her little face was drawn with anguish. "Nonie loves me," she added under her breath.

"You know what happened in Geohgia?" Hitchens said threateningly. "And what happened in Chahleston and what happened in New Yohk? Well, do you want it to happen in Saha-toga?"

Bébée shuddered. The man's words brought back to her all those memories that had been growing dim under the loving care of Nora and Mr. O'Neil, all the sad and unhappy past that she would like to forget utterly.

"But you are n't going to be foolish enough to make me inform on you," Hitchens continued.

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“Every one hates a renegade, a common traitor! I don’t care a snap of my fingers for these Yankees you ’re with. They can take up with whom they like so fah as I am concerned, but I don’t believe they ’re overfond of a traitor, No’t h or South. Now here ’s your chance to do something for the land you were bohn in. It will mean a lot to you and youhs, and make some folks we both know of think a heap different from what they have done. Come now, my girl, don’t be foolish. You know where O’Neil keeps his papers, and I want you to get me that blue envelope. You can come back to the hotel while the others are at the band concert.”

The significance of this remark was at once apparent to Bébée. It showed conclusively that Mr. Hitchens, as he called himself, did not know that Uncle Tim was at that very moment getting ready to go away. And the plan formed in her mind to keep him here till it was too late to steal anything.

“But, you see, I don’t believe they would let me come back to the hotel,” the child suggested, keep-

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ing this idea of delay before her, and seeming for the first time to consider doing what he wished.

"If there was anything I said I wanted they would send Mam'selle."

"Well, can't you take the woman with you and let her stay on the pohch," said Hitchens, impatiently. "If you told heh you would only be a minute she'd wait and let you go alone. I'll be thehe to get the papers."

"What do you want the papers for?" asked Bébée. "They are n't much account. Uncle Tim once said he wished I'd burned them up."

"Never mind what I want them for!" growled the man, in answer. "I want them, and it's plain if O'Neil said you could burn them up it won't be stealing to take them."

"He did n't seem to care about them," agreed Bébée.

"Then you'll get them?" asked the man eagerly.

"I don't see why I should do this for you," the child began; but he interrupted her menacingly.

"If you use your memory you'll know," he

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said. "If you have n't fohgotten Geohgia I reckon you 'll remembeh that I usually get what I want—or make trouble."

Bébée looked about her nervously. The man before her was connected in her mind with all the unhappiness she had known in the world and even seemed to be the cause of most of it. She tried to think a suitable answer to keep him there longer, when the sound of footsteps coming rapidly toward them interrupted.

It was Mam'selle and she called hurriedly,

"Mademoiselle Bébée, where have you stay' that you do not bid your uncle good-by? He leave' on the instant! Now he is go away and Mademoiselle Nora she cry."

"So!" muttered Hitchens under his breath. "You 've kept me talking hehe, knowing all the time that O'Neil was leaving! Well, young lady, you have n't finished with me yet, remembeh." But Bébée had flashed by him without a word.

To Mr. O'Neil and Nora, Bébée's extreme distress at his departure was a surprise. She was



"I usually get what I want—or make trouble"

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white-faced and trembling when she flung her arms about him and begged him not to go.

"But I must, me dear," he answered gently. "Sure, to be leavin' you and Nonie together is me only comfort."

"But you 'll be back soon, Uncle Tim," Bébée begged. "Oh, please say you 'll be back soon?"

She clung to him in desperation, burying her head on his shoulder as if to hide herself.

"I 'll not be sayin' when, but 't will be as soon as I can. That I 'll promise you," Mr. O'Neil assured her, and then, reluctantly, she let him go.

It was plain to Nora that Bébée was not herself after Mr. O'Neil left them. Out of doors she was shy and nervous, casting furtive glances about as if she feared something. Even in the hotel, safe in her room, she jumped at the slightest noise, and when at length it was decided that they should return to New York, the sight of the child's relief was pathetic.

"I don't think this hotel could be burned, do you, Nonie?" she said, with a confident smile

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when they were settled once more in the Astor House.

“Indeed I don’t,” answered Nora, happy to see Bébée like herself again, “but what put such a notion into your head?”

“Oh, nothing,” answered Bébée evasively, and then she ran and kissed Nora rapturously. “Oh, I ’m so glad to be back in the safe city, Nonie.”

Many questions came into Nora’s mind but she did n’t press for any further explanation.

CHAPTER XX

OYSTERS AND RED BALLOONS

MR. O'NEIL returned from Washington late in October bringing with him the stirring story of Sheridan's ride from Winchester, and Early's defeat. Good news indeed for the patriots in the Astor House lobby, where he received an ovation. Upstairs in his own apartment, he met with a warm welcome, too, although war was never mentioned. It would be hard to tell which of the girls was more delighted to see him, and he was very happy to be with them again.

"Sure, Nonie, ye're growin'," he said, standing a little distance away while he regarded her critically. "No one can say ye're broad as ye're long now; and Bébée too," he went on, turning toward her. "She's nigh as tall as you and as sweet and pretty as a moss-rose."

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"Daddy!" cried Nora greatly shocked, "you 'll turn the child's head, with your stylish compliments. Remember that 'praise to the face is open disgrace,' as you 've told me yourself."

"But 't is all in the family," protested Mr. O'Neil.

Bébée laughed heartily, with no appearance of being unduly affected by his flattery.

"'T is Nonie 's the pretty one, Uncle Tim," she cried gaily. "You should have heard the forewoman at Madame Demorest's. She called Madame herself to see how fine Nonie looked."

"Oh, I might have observed it," said Mr. O'Neil with a twinkle in his eye, "but 'praise to the face'—ye know the rest. I 'd hate to spoil the child." He made a ludicrous attempt to imitate Nora, who blushed while they laughed at her.

"Just wait till you see her in her new dress," Bébée warned him. "You 'll not be able to tell her how pretty she is."

"Now 't is her own taste she 's braggin' of," Nora put in. "She would n't let Madame Demorest sell me a Psyche robe of turtle-dove rep—"

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"It made her look pasty," Bébée interrupted. "It showed all her freckles and—and she 's a picture in the sea-green mohair with chataigne velvet,—her Garibaldi 's white with brown velvet and—"

"Oh, worra! worra!" exclaimed Mr. O'Neil, holding up his hands in consternation. "Have n't I always said I had no use for dead languages? Go put it on, Nonie, and save me life."

"I 'm not going to leave you now, to try on dresses," Nora protested. "I 'll wear it on Sunday. Then you 'll see both of them."

"Both of them," repeated Mr. O'Neil vaguely. "Do ye wear two dresses then? Is that the latest style?"

Bébée and Nora laughed gaily.

"No, Daddy dear," cried Nora. "'T is only that Bébée has one, too. We dress just alike, because I 've observed at the Seminary that sisters often do."

"So that 's it," said Mr. O'Neil; "a fine plan I call that. Sure they give 'em to ye cheaper,

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don't they, when ye buy double the quantity?"

"I don't know about the price," answered Nora, "but don't let's talk about old dresses any more. Tell us, are you back for good?"

"For the best part of the winter," replied Mr. O'Neil, seating himself and taking one of the girls on each knee. "The two armies are sittin' lookin' at each other across the Rapidan River down in Virginia. 'T is a funny thing is war. There's the boys on both sides, as friendly as ye please when there's no fightin' to be done. Sendin' messages acrost to each other by little kites and exchangin' tobacco and coffee by boats that they whittle out of wood and sail down the stream. Letters and newspapers and what not, goin' and comin' as if they were the greatest friends in all the world. That's one of the ways I've tried for news for Lady Castleton, but I've got none."

"That's too bad," said Nora sympathetically, but letting the subject drop, for she still was uneasy about the coat of arms.

Mr. O'Neil's return was a signal for a great in-

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crease in the two girls' amusements. He was never so happy as when he was making them happy, and he took them to theaters, the opera and the concerts or whatever happened to be going on. Indeed there was a great deal of gaiety at this time in the South as well as the North, for it seemed as if the people, saddened by the conflict, hailed any form of entertainment as a relief. This was so noticeable that foreign writers accused the Americans of heartlessness.¹

"The red balloons are up!" Mr. O'Neil cried one afternoon, as he came in. "We'll have oysters to-night. Get on your bonnets and we'll go to Dorlan's for supper. 'T is famous for sea-foods of all sorts."

They went with huge delight and, outside, Bébée stopped to look at the big red muslin ball with a candle burning inside that showed the world that oysters were in town. Nor was she the only one who paused.

Nora and Bébée watched the people crowded in

¹ A correspondent of the "London Times" wrote that the luxury and extravagance was "shocking"; but, "There may be a deal of bravado in all this apparent indifference."—E. B. K.

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the restaurant, quite unconscious of the many admiring glances cast in their direction. They were dressed alike, and Mr. O'Neil, sitting between them, chuckled proudly, quite aware that there was no prettier sight to be seen in the place than his two girls.

Once, however, his glance grew stern.

"And who are ye starin' at?" he said under his breath, starting forward as if he intended to rise.

The children looked at him in surprise.

"Who is staring, Uncle Tim?" asked Bébée, turning in her seat, for Mr. O'Neil's gaze was directed behind her.

"'T is a man I seem to have seen before. He's gone now," answered Mr. O'Neil, "but I did n't like his looks and that's a fact."

"The only kind of starers I mind are those with big noses like birds' beaks," said Bébée. "I can't bear that kind, it makes me think of horrid things."

It so happened that the man who had annoyed Mr. O'Neil answered that description exactly, and he looked at her sharply.

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"What sort of horrid things do they make ye think of, me dear?" he asked.

"Oh, of riots and—houses burning, with big orange and yellow flames and—down there, you know."

She stopped abruptly, looking about her in a frightened way as if she scented danger.

"Me dear," said Mr. O'Neil earnestly, "don't worrit your little head. Nothin' can hurt ye now."

"Oh, don't let Bébée talk of riots and fires," Nora insisted. "It makes her nervous, and I don't wonder, seein' what she went through."

The subject was changed and Bébée's agitation was soon forgotten.

On the following morning Nora had lingered after Mam'selle and the child had gone down to the carriage on their way to school, and she was still fixing her veil over her face as she left their parlor. She had on the same dress she had worn the night before, so that in that dark hallway a person might easily mistake her for Bébée.

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As Nora neared the stairs a hand was laid on her shoulder.

"Just a minute, my deah," said a strange voice in her ear, and, with a start, she looked up into a hawklike face that smiled grimly down upon her. It was the Mr. Hitchens whom Bébée had encountered at Saratoga.

"You won't fool me again like you did at the Springs," the man went on. "You were mighty cleveh neveh to let me know O'Neil was going away so soon. But that trick won't work twice. He's back, and the letters in the blue envelopes will be comin' heah again. I want them, undehstand, *all of them*, and this time you are to get them for me."

Nora, after the first moment of surprise, got her wits together as quickly as she could. It was clear to her at once that this man thought she was Bébée, and she stood still waiting for him to commit himself further. The minute danger threatened her friend she forgot herself, and she had no doubt that here was the big-nosed man, the mere thought of whom had set the child shud-

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dering and who, it was now evident, had caused her painful nervousness at Saratoga.

"Why don't you say something?" demanded the man. "Are you dumb? You understand what you 're to do?"

Nora nodded her head and muttered "Yes," in a muffled tone, so that he should not find out his mistake.

"You won't get off so easy as you might have before," the man went on. "It is n't only one letter this time, but any you can take without being seen. I'll arrange for you to get them to me, all right. Just hide them till I ask for them. The ones in the blue envelopes, you know."

"And what if I won't do it?" asked Nora.

"You 'll do it," answered the man, in a menacing tone. "You know what happened long ago?"

"And must you have all the letters?" asked Nora softly, as if she were willing to give in.

"Yes, until I find the one I want," answered Hitchens. "Then you 'll see the last of me. It might be the first but it might not be till you 'd given me a dozen."

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“And then you ’ll never bother me any more?” Nora questioned.

“No, indeed! I ’ll be off to—well, you know whehe,” he answered, with a glance about him.

Nora hardly knew what course to take. She feared the man, and yet she had no intention of doing what he asked. She had no inkling of his authority for demanding such a service of Bébée, but it seemed certain that he had a hold over the child and she wanted very much to find out what it was. Only then could she be sure of protecting Bébée—and yet she was fearful of what the revelation might lead to. It might easily be that the solving of the mystery would bring about a separation, and to avoid this Nora stood ready to do almost anything.

In her perplexity, and half-forgetting the stranger, she threw back her veil. It seemed as if she could n’t breathe with it over her face.

The effect of this was instantaneous. The man uttered a low cry and made a motion as if he

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would run away, but checked himself and came nearer to Nora.

"You're the otheh one, I see," he whispered. "Well, I've made a mistake—but I would n't talk about it if I were you!"

"I'm not afraid of you," retorted Nora. "You can't harm me. But I won't have you tormenting Bébée the way you're doing. She's only a child, and—and—"

"And you love heh," interrupted Hitchens. "Well, see that you don't talk about what I've just said to you or youh Bébée will be taken away from you."

By accident he had hit on the one threat that would move Nora most.

"I'll promise not to say anything, if you will promise not to make Bébée steal my father's letters for you," replied Nora with as much assurance and dignity as she could assume, while her heart was beating suffocatingly and she was wondering if he could carry out his threat.

"I'll promise nothing!" the man retorted, "and

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what 's mohe I 'll have those letters by hook or by crook. Go and tell your father if you want to,—but say good-by to youh precious pet before you do it!" and, with that, he turned on his heel and disappeared down the hall.

CHAPTER XXI

A SPY IN THE ASTOR HOUSE

NORA'S first thought after her encounter with Mr. Hitchens was to go directly to her father, but the man's threat might mean that he would reveal the whereabouts of those who had a claim upon Bébée and she had always feared that, in such a case, her father would say that they must surrender the child. This possibility speedily made her change her mind, and she went on to school as if nothing had happened.

A few days later she saw the man again, hurrying through the hotel lobby. She was sure he had seen her, but he gave no sign. Then she began to notice that Bébée was more silent than usual and less inclined to leave their rooms. It was not hard to guess the reason since her own meeting with Mr. Hitchens.

Meanwhile Mr. O'Neil came and went, busy

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with many important affairs and, constantly, blue envelopes made their appearance in his mail.

One evening at supper Nora noticed that her father had a worn look as if he were doing too much, and later that night, when they were alone for a few moments, she spoke about it.

"Daddy dear," she began softly, "'T is a scolding I 'm goin' to give you for working too hard, and you must stop it."

"Ah, well, me dear," answered Mr. O'Neil, "I 'll not be denyin' I 'm tired. But it is n't the work, me dear. It's worry that drags on a body."

"Aye, that's a true word you spoke," agreed Nora, feelingly. "And what have ye to worry about?" demanded Mr. O'Neil, quick to note the earnestness in her voice.

"Have n't I *you*?" she asked patting him on the cheek.

"Oh, well, if 't is that, ye need n't be botherin'," he assured her. "'T will all be over with the election; but, as things are now, it fair drives a

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body crazy to tell an honest man or woman these days. There 's nothin' safe from spies and intriguers. What would ye think if I were to tell ye that me own mail was bein' tampered with in this hotel? And official letters stolen. Ah, 't is not bein' able to trust a livin' soul that 's wearin' on me."

So much upset was Mr. O'Neil, and so intensely in earnest, that he failed to see that Nora had suddenly grown pale and was sitting straight on his knee, looking before her with wide open eyes.

"Do you mean that your letters have been taken out of this room?" she asked in a tone of consternation.

"Aye, 't is the only thing left to believe," answered Mr. O'Neil. "Mr. Stetson has been on the outlook for a week past, and 't is not downstairs they disappear. Some one gets them in here, and I 'm goin' to find out who, be sure of that."

"Is it bad, stealin' letters?" Nora asked, as she slipped from his knee.

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"'T is a good long term in jail is the penalty," he answered sternly.

"But who would want to take them, Daddy?" she persisted.

"Some Southern spy I 'm suspectin'," he said thoughtfully, "and if it is, he's in danger of bein' hanged. Now good night, and God bless ye, me dear."

The next morning her father was as cheerful and full of jokes as usual. He made no reference to the conversation he had had with her and, as Nora kissed him good-by before she went to school, she wondered if he had forgotten all about it.

Later that day Mr. O'Neil sent word to them not to wait for him, so the two little girls had supper in the great dining-room with Mam'selle. In the midst of their meal Nora discovered that she had forgotten her handkerchief and at once excused herself.

She ran upstairs, and was hurrying back through their parlor when she stopped abruptly, staring at the table. There, in plain sight, were

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two of the blue envelopes that she knew so well to be official business of her father's.

For a moment she hesitated, then with a furtive look about her she picked them up, tucked them inside her Garibaldi blouse and hastened out. As she disappeared, the door of Mr. O'Neil's room opened without noise, showing that it had been ajar and Mr. O'Neil himself appeared on the threshold.

"Now what can be the meanin' of that?" he said to himself. "Sure I never thought to catch Nonie in me trap."

He stood for a moment, meditating deeply, then he stepped back quickly and softly closed the door of his room behind him.

Mr. O'Neil was not at all surprised when Nora handed him the letters next morning with the explanation that she had hidden them for safety.

"We'll have no more bother with those blue letters anyhow," he said. "I've arranged to get them in such a way that no one can steal them."

"'T is best," his daughter answered, suppressing a huge sigh of relief. "'T is uncomfortable

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to feel that there is some one about you who would be takin' things that don't belong to them."

She spoke quite calmly, striving with all her might to hide her deep concern, but something in her manner made Mr. O'Neil jump to the conclusion that she suspected some one. He was tempted to question her, but it was plain that whoever it was she wished to protect them, so he changed his mind. What good would it do to pain Nora? Indeed there was little likelihood that the child had discovered anything of importance where the secret service men were at a loss, so he determined to say no more about it, but in the future to take good care that there was nothing in his possession that would be any temptation to spies.

Nora was relieved by her father's new arrangement about his letters, but it by no means quieted all of her fears, so long as the mysterious man was still to be seen about the hotel.

The intense interest in the coming election, the vital consequences hanging on the choice of the next President, the news from the front, alter-

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nately good and bad, all these things kept the people in the city in a ferment; but the victories of Thomas, Sheridan, Farragut and Sherman during the summer and autumn had silenced those who declared that the war was a failure, and it seemed almost certain that President Lincoln would be reëlected.

This prospect made the South desperate. Southern resources of all sorts were exhausted. Children and old men had been pressed into active service, and now when a man was lost there was no one to replace him. Dissension in the North was their only hope.

Southern spies and agitators renewed their activity in the Northern States. Small riots occurred in various places, though none of such magnitude as those of the year before, for the police kept the people well in hand and the agitators made little headway.

In all of the political work Mr. O'Neil played an active part, so that the girls saw little of him, though he would snatch an hour or so to be with them whenever the opportunity afforded. But

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he was away most of the day, and often of the night as well.

One afternoon Nora was hurrying through the hallway to her room and as she turned a corner she ran plump into the hawk-faced man.

"You are the very young lady I was looking foh," he murmured in an undertone.

"What is it you want?" asked Nora, trying to control herself.

"A small service," he answered politely, with a slight bow.

Nora's first impulse was to tell him flatly that she would have nothing to do with him, but, upon second thought, she decided to hold her tongue, at least long enough to find out the man's purpose. There were no letters now that could be stolen, but it would be as well for her to hear him, so that she would have some idea of the demands he would make upon Bébée.

"Tell me what it is you want?" she said, shortly.

"As I told you, it 's a mighty small matteh," replied Hitchens, looking about him, and then,

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drawing nearer to Nora, who held her ground against an almost overpowering instinct to fly from him, he dropped his voice to a whisper.

"All I ask you to do, is to take a candle to a certain room," he explained. "The numbeh of the room will be marked on the package and I want a light left there. That is n't much, is it?"

Nora looked at the man in astonishment.

"Now where's the sense in that?" she demanded. "Why should n't I light the gas? And who 'll be in the room—and—"

"There 'll be no one there," the man cut in. "And never mind the gas. All you will have to do, is what I tell you. Light the candle and put it on the washstand. Then go away and shut the dooh after you."

Nora puzzled her head in perplexity. She could see no reason in it, and, on the other hand, no harm either. The question then was, could she make a bargain with him.

"I don't know why you ask me to do such a foolish thing," she said, "but you can't expect me to do it for nothing."

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"What do you want?" demanded Hitchens, none too gently.

"You must promise never again to speak to Bébée," she answered shortly.

"Humm!" he muttered to himself. "Well, I 'll promise never to speak to her again after you 've lighted that candle. That 's faih, I reckon."

Nora's heart leaped for joy at the thought, then came a reaction.

"How can I trust you?" she faltered.

"I don't know as you can," the man admitted, "but this I 'll tell you in confidence. The night you light that candle I will leave New York City for good. Believe it or not as you please, it 's a fact all the same."

There was something in the way he spoke that convinced Nora that he was telling the truth.

"I 'll do it," she said, after a little pause, "but how can I get into the room?"

"It will be my room," he answered, "and I 'll send you the key. I can trust you not to disturb any of the things. You see, that 's why I 'd rather you did it than one of the bellboys. They

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might be curious and poke about. All you have to do is to light the candle, put it on the washstand and go away, locking the door after you. Then you can throw away the key and forget that you eveh saw me. In return I 'll promise not to speak to you again, nor to the other child eitheh."

"I 'll do it," repeated Nora.

"And you 'll not say anything about it to—to—"

"I 'm not likely to brag about going into a strange person's room," replied Nora irritably.

"Ah, certainly not, certainly not," and with a bow Mr. Hitchens left her.

She looked after him for a moment, wonderingly.

"I can't see any sense in it," she murmured, "but I 'd do more than that to save Bébée."

This bargain at once put Nora at her ease in regard to Bébée. Perhaps the wish was father to the thought, but at any rate she believed that the man would hold to his agreement and not annoy the child further. As to her own share in the matter, she racked her brains to find some

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objection to it and could see none, though to be sure she found no explanation either as to why such a proceeding should be desired at all. However, no wrong to any one was involved, and she began to hum to herself, lightened of a load that had kept her depressed for many a day.

In this state of mind she ceased to keep a lookout for the man and had almost forgotten him, when one day, some weeks after Lincoln's reëlection, she was startled on going into her room at dusk one evening, to strike a small package with her hand and send it rolling to the floor. Picking it up she found it was cylindrical in shape, roughly wrapped in grayish paper on which was written in red ink, "Room 56 at 8:45 to-night." There was nothing further, but she did n't need to open the bundle to know what it contained.

For the first time since the matter had been proposed to her, she began to feel frightened. The secret way in which the package had reached her was alarming and showed that some strange person came into their rooms without detection. And this knowledge brought the question, "Could

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it have been some one else and not Bébée who took the letters?"

Nora's mouth felt dry and her hand shook as she lighted the gas, and the reflection of her face in the mirror looked as if she had been ill.

"I 'm silly," she whispered, with a shake of her shoulders, that was almost a shiver. "Nothing can happen to me here in the Astor House."

She reasoned herself into a calmer state of mind, assured that the errand she was to undertake could not possibly be harmful to any one, and by supper-time she was as usual.

After supper Mr. O'Neil left them to attend to some business, and she and Bébée went to their parlor to spend the evening together. Nora expected that she would have to make some excuse at the appointed time, and she was distinctly relieved, when, at twenty minutes of nine, Bébée went out, saying that she was going down to the office for stamps.

No sooner had the door closed than Nora jumped to her feet and hurried to her room. She hoped to be back from her strange errand before

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Bébée returned, and she picked up the package and opened it hastily. It contained a few sulphur matches in addition to the piece of candle and the key, and so, fully equipped, after a final glance at the clock, she slipped out into the corridor.

Room Number 56 was on the same floor, and she ran through the halls quietly, wondering all the while what she should say if any one met her, but the passage was quite deserted and she fitted the key in the lock without hesitation, determined to be done with the matter as quickly as possible.

As she opened the door a peculiar odor filled her nostrils and she halted for an instant; then she went in bravely and lighted the candle.

She cast a quick glance about the room in search of the washstand. The place looked very untidy, as if some one had left in a hurry but she took little note of this. Seeing the piece of furniture she was looking for on the opposite side of the room she crossed to it.

"He's been doing something to keep the moths

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away," she murmured, as she sniffed the pungent odor that filled the air; then she leaned over the washstand to find a place to fix her candle-end.

The basin and the soap-cup had been left partially filled and the whole top was dripping.

"Sure he must have been here, just now," Nora commented. "Why could n't he have done it himself? Well, it can't do any harm," with which reflection, she placed the lighted candle on a convenient spot and went out of the room, locking the door behind her.

"I'm glad that's over," she thought, and ran along the corridor, intent upon getting back to her own parlor as quickly as she could.

As she passed by a hallway intersecting the one she was in, Nora glanced down it, and then stopped short with a cry of pained surprise. Near the far corner Bébée was in the act of locking the door of a room.

CHAPTER XXII

FIRE! FIRE!

THERE was something in Bébée's furtive attitude that held Nora spellbound for a moment; then she saw the child straighten and start away at a rapid pace.

With a dread of she knew not what, Nora hurried after her, but not wishing to attract attention, she dared not call out. "What could the child be doing there?" she asked herself. "Sure she's been on the same errand as meself, from the look of it," was the answering thought.

Bébée was seemingly intent upon gaining their own rooms but ere she reached the end of the long hall she quickened her pace and Nora saw, ascending the stairs ahead of them, the massive figure of the old washerwoman.

For an instant Bébée hesitated, then she hurried forward in the wake of the old negress.

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Nora hurried also, but before she reached the foot of the stairs Bébée was at the top, crouching down as if in fear of being seen. A moment later, however, she sprang up and raced on, far too intent upon what she was doing to look back. Nora, behind her, followed fast, but as she arrived at the upper landing another surprise awaited her.

Bébée was following Mandy, Nora was following Bébée, but it was perfectly evident that the darky washerwoman, too, was in pursuit of some one, for she was sneaking up the hall, very quietly for one of her great size, and seemed to be making for a door that stood ajar.

Just as she reached it a man darted out. As he passed her the old darky woman made a grab at him. Silently he hit at her clutching hands and, evading her, made off rapidly in the direction of the back stairs. At the same moment a puff of smoke came curling out of the room he had left.

The old negress without any hesitation rushed through the open door, out of which the smoke was coming in ever-increasing quantities.

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Bébée reached the entrance, with Nora scarce a pace behind her.

"Bébée," she called. "Bébée, don't go in there!" The child stopped in surprise and Nora grasped her arm.

"You are not to go in there," she insisted.

"But, Nonie," cried Bébée with blazing eyes, "I must go in, she'll be burned up and—"

"I'll go to her," answered Nora firmly. "You run to the office and get help. You can go faster than I. Waste no time. Go at once," and she gave the child a push away from the door.

With a low moan of fear, Bébée looked at her for an instant as if about to protest and then tore down the stairs.

Nora, as soon as she saw Bébée started, stepped inside the room. The dense smoke choked her and her eyes began to smart at once, but she went on bravely in spite of the smothering atmosphere.

"Mandy, where are you?" she called.

"Hehe I is, honey," came the cheerful voice

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of the old negress, but Nora could see nothing of her. She found the washstand, however, and intent upon putting the fire out, she picked up the water-pitcher meaning to empty it on the flames, but as she raised it the voice of Mandy came through the thickening smoke.

"Don't touch that pitcheh, honey," she called, and just then a half dozen men came running into the room.

It always remained a mystery to Nora how they had managed to get there so quickly, nor did she quite appreciate the appalling seriousness of a fire in a crowded hotel, but there they were and, for the moment, she cared little how they had come.

Mr. Stetson, the manager, and Mr. Lewis, a telegraph operator, were among the number, with Bébé in their wake, and they took instant charge. There was a smashing of glass as the panes were broken in the window and a cool refreshing breeze from outside soon cleared the room of smoke, revealing old Mandy plumped down in the middle of the floor on a pile of bed-

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ding, calm and serene as if nothing much had happened.

At the direction of Mr. Stetson, two of the men seized her and pulled her to her feet, but as they did so a puff of smoke came up from the heap upon which she had been sitting.

One of the men took the pitcher from Nora's hand and was about to turn the contents upon the smoldering bedding.

"Don' you put dat on the fiah, man!" cried Mammy, struggling with the two who held her.

At that moment another man came running into the room. He was a clerk and was laboring under such excitement that he drew all eyes to him.

"This is the plot the Secretary of War warned us about on Election Day," he gasped.

"What makes you think that?" asked Mr. Stetson quickly.

"We've just received a report that the St. James Hotel is on fire, and so are the St. Nicholas and La Farge House. Barnum's is blazing and Wallack's, too. It's a Southern plan to burn

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the city, sir. Edwin Booth had to make a speech at the Winter Garden to keep the people from running out in a panic.”¹

There was an excited murmur and Mr. Stetson's face paled a little but he stepped to the door and closed it.

“Even if that is so,” he said with great calmness, which had the effect of bringing every one to their senses, “they have n't burned the Astor House, and I see no reason for unduly alarming our guests. Two of you go and investigate all the vacant rooms, but say nothing to any one.”

Attention was then directed to the bedding still smoldering on the floor. The breeze coming in through the broken windows had fanned it till now a flame or two again showed in its folds.

¹ Mr. Stetson's clerk voiced the general belief, but was mistaken in reporting that Wallack's Theater or the Winter Garden were burned. In the latter place of amusement, however, the smoke from the La Farge Hotel did cause a panic. In all, thirteen hotels, Barnum's Museum, a large lumber-yard and many ships in the harbor were set on fire that night. It is pleasant to know that, in spite of the excitement in the Astor House, the morning newspapers brought the first news to the majority of the guests that three attempts were made to burn the building.—E. B. K.

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Once more the man with the pitcher raised it, and Mammy's agitated voice broke in,

"Don't put none of dat on it, man!" she cried warningly.

"Do you still want to get the best of us?" the man answered, about to douse the contents of the pitcher on the flames.

"Won't nobody stop that fool man?" cried Mammy, struggling in the grasp of her captors. "Ain't you-all got no noses? Can't you smell that it ain't water? Don't throw it on the fiah or you 'll never be able to get it out."

Mr. Stetson took the pitcher out of the man's hands.

"It is spirits of turpentine," he said shortly. "Here, George," he went on, "go into the bathroom, and bring some water. Hurry now!"

The fire was quickly extinguished and there being nothing more to be done, all eyes turned to the old woman still standing majestically with a guard on each side of her.

"Shall we hand her over to the police?" asked one of them, addressing Mr. Stetson.

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"What for?" he inquired, knitting his brows.

"Why, sir," answered the man in surprise. "Is n't she one of them rebels' darkies sent here to set the place afire?"

"What makes you think that?" asked Mr. Stetson calmly.

"Why it stands to reason the rebels must have some one to set their fires and they don't count darkies—"

For a few moments Nora heard no more of the arguments about Mandy. At the words "some one must set their fires" her thoughts flew to her own share in the night's mysterious work. That was what her candle was lighted for! She had been helping to set the hotel on fire. She must go and put it out. With a gasp as if she was short of breath she looked around her for a chance to escape. There were several men between her and the door, and it seemed to her guilty conscience as if they must suspect her if they looked at her. But at that moment she heard a newcomer speak to Mr. Stetson."

"There's been another fire discovered in Num-

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ber 56, sir, but we 've got it out. The room was actually afloat with turpentine."

"Keep up the search," commanded Mr. Stetson, "but do not arouse the guests."

Nora gave a sigh of relief, but her guilt was none the less real to her, even though no mischief had been done.

Her attention came back to what was going on around her.

"I can't understand," Mr. Stetson was saying to Mammy, "why, if you were coming for the O'Neil wash, you were on the third floor."

"Here's the plain trufe, seh," Mammy said with dignity. "I did n't set no fiah. If you-all knows the 'xperience I've had with fiahs you' be mighty certain I'd never set one a-purpose. But when I came upstaihs I see a man what I had seen befohe, and wheheveh he is, there's bound to be burnings. So whehe 'he runs I run, and up he comes to this room. But he, bein' quicker than me, he lights his fiah before I gets to him. I grab at him when he's comin' out, but I can't hold him. Then, they bein' nothin' else I can

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do, I comes in and looks for somethin' to throw on the fiah to smother it, like my ole master done tole me to do. But they ain't nothin', so I jes' sits down on that fiah to squelch it. That 's the truth, seh, the gospel truth." ¹

"It seems hardly possible," said Mr. Stetson, after a moment's thought. "I think we shall have to make a further investigation of the matter. I hope what you say is true, but there is no one to answer for you, and it is too serious an affair to treat lightly. I fear I must put you into the hands of the police."

With a cry of dismay Bébée sprang forward in front of the old negro woman and faced the men with flashing eyes.

"The police shan't have her," she said, between her clenched teeth. "They shan't have her. I'll

¹ It was reported that a woman went from hotel to hotel that night and after each visit fire was discovered. This may have resulted from some distorted rumor concerning old Mammy's share in the events that transpired at the Astor House. A man named Kennedy confessed, before he was executed, that the attempt to burn New York was made in retaliation for Sheridan's raid through the Shenandoah Valley.—E. B. K.

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answer for her. She's my mammy, my very own mammy, she belongs to me, and I know she did n't set fire to the room!"

As she spoke her eyes strayed to Nora, and for a moment they faltered, but she held her head high and did no flinch.

This revelation brought Nora's thoughts tumbling about in her head chaotically. The old negress was, after all, the missing mammy and Bébée had known it all the time, of course. What did it mean? Nora felt that the dreaded revelation about Bébée's past was bound to come now; but, none the less, instinctively she immediately tried to find a way to prevent it. If she could get the old woman off, perhaps that would settle the matter; at any rate it was her duty to tell Mr. Stetson that Mandy was innocent and she stepped forward to speak to him.

"I saw a man run out of the room, Mr. Stetson," she said, tremblingly. "Mandy *did* try to stop him, as she says. I'm sure she's innocent."

Mr. Stetson looked at her in surprise.

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"Were you on this floor, too, Miss Nora?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," answered Nora. "I followed Bébée."

"And what was *she* doing here?" asked Mr. Stetson.

"She was following Mandy."

"And why were either of you girls in the halls?" was the next question.

Nora could not answer. She looked blankly at Mr. Stetson and the quiet in the room seemed appalling. She gazed about her only to meet the inquisitive eyes of the men who stood silently waiting for her answer, but she could say nothing. The whole story would surely come out and she would lose Bébée. Her heart sank, the tears came into her eyes and she gave an involuntary cry of sorrow.

"Oh, Daddy! Where's my Daddy?" and as if in answer Mr. O'Neil hobbled into the room.

He had no idea what the trouble was, but seeing Nora in an attitude of despair, he went to her and took her in his arms.

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"What is it, Nonie, me darlin'?" he whispered. "Here's your daddy and nothin' shall harm ye. What is it? Tell Daddy."

"I can't tell you here," she answered. "I must talk to you alone. Take me to our rooms."

Mr. Stetson explained the situation in a few words, and Mr. O'Neil, not a little mystified, suggested that the old negress should be taken to the office till he had heard what Nora had to say. This was done, but, when Nora asked Bébée to come with her, the child shook her head.

"Not till Mammy's freed, Nonie," she answered in a sad little voice. "I must stay with her till then," and she went to the office also.

In their own room, Nora made her confession to her father. She held nothing back but poured out into his sympathetic ears the whole of the story and her fear of losing Bébée. She told it plainly, hiding nothing, nor did she attempt to excuse herself in any way. In fact, her one thought was to shield Bébée, and Mr. O'Neil needed no explanation to give him the motive underlying all.

FIRE! FIRE!

“And now you see, Daddy,” she sobbed at the end, “poor old Mandy did n’t have anything to do with it, and you must tell Mr. Stetson to let her go, so that I can have Bébée back again. And, Daddy, you won’t let them take her from me?”

Mr. O’Neil got to his feet with a deep sigh.

“Nonie darlin’,” he said to her, “ye must trust your old daddy to do all he can to keep Bébée; but, dear, who can tell what may be back of this? If it’s money that’s needed—say, I’ll buy off anybody!” This idea appealed to him strongly as it suddenly popped into his head. “That’s what we can do, me dear. We’ll buy up the claims for her, if we have to,” and with a kiss he left her.

Outside the door Mr. O’Neil walked slowly and thoughtfully. As Nora had told the story it had seemed certain that Bébée’s history must come out, and that they would lose her. But this new plan appeared more possible the more he thought of it.

The shadowy man in the background was the

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key to the situation. Undoubtedly he had some strong hold upon the child, and Mr. O'Neil speculated upon what this influence might be.

Suddenly he came to a stop with an ejaculation of surprise.

"Sure, 't is her father!" he muttered under his breath. "I might have known it."

He went over in his mind the evidence that tended to support this belief and made out a strong case for the supposition. First of all, Bébée came from the South somewhere, and her father, naturally, would be a rebel sympathizer. What more reasonable then than to believe him to be a spy who was using her to help in his work? Otherwise why had Bébée's parents not made some claim for her? More than a year had passed, yet nothing had been heard from them. Surely the best explanation yet found for this was that they knew all the time where she was, and had a purpose in keeping quiet. The old darky woman was, of course, concerned in the matter. How far Mr. O'Neil did n't trouble to speculate, but she, too, was in the background,

FIRE! FIRE!

and her coming to do the wash was all part of the scheme so that she could serve as the go-between for Bébée and the spy.

"Sure it *is* her father!" he muttered again, positively. "And *him* I'll buy. A fella like that will think a lot of money. 'T will be all right for Nonie, God bless her."

He walked on briskly now. He would tell Mr. Stetson enough of the circumstances to show him that the negress had no hand in setting the room on fire, and then he would force the facts out of her before he began his negotiations leading to a legal adoption of Bébée, who, he felt certain, had been an unwilling victim throughout. That was what he intended to do and he was quite ready to spend any amount of money to accomplish it.

He reached the bottom of the stairs and was crossing the lobby toward the door of Mr. Stetson's office when that gentleman came out hurriedly.

"Oh, here you are, Mr. O'Neil," he said, advancing toward his guest. "They've brought a

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letter for you into my office thinking you were there, I suppose. It is marked 'Personal and Important,' and was sent by messenger from the steamer. I was about to send it up," and he handed Mr. O'Neil a letter which said:

My dear Mr. O'Neil:

Mrs. Cochrane recognizes the chain. The child must be Patricia. Keep her till I come. Am sending this by a person who has undertaken to see that it reaches you without delay, and will sail for America on the next steamer. In great haste.

R. CASTLETON.

Mr. O'Neil looked dumbly at the paper in his hands.

"Mrs. Cochrane is Miss Eileen," he thought slowly, "and R. Castleton is Lady Castleton—and the child is Bébée!"

In a moment all his speculations had been shattered. All his fine plans for Nora's happiness swept away.

FIRE! FIRE!

“Sure I can’t buy off Miss Eileen and Lady Castleton,” he muttered to himself, then after a long pause he murmured, “Poor Nonie. Poor little Nonie!”

CHAPTER XXIII

A CHAIN OF CIRCUMSTANCES

MR. O'NEIL had no trouble in freeing the old negress, though just what he said to Mr. Stetson he never quite remembered. He was so upset by the letter from Lady Castleton and so wholly occupied with the consequences that would result from this discovery that he but half realized what went on about him.

However, old Mammy was released and Bébée ran upstairs to Nora as fast as she could, while Mr. O'Neil sat in Mr. Stetson's office talking over the fires.

The two girls flung their arms about each other when they met.

"Oh, Nonie, do you still love me?" cried Bébée, tears running down her cheeks.

"Oh, me dear Bébée, and why should n't I?"

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sobbed Nora, taking the child in her lap, though in truth Bébée was nearly as large as she.

"But you know I've been cheating you," Bébée murmured mournfully. "Of course I knew it was Mammy all the time; but—but, Nonie dear, I could n't tell you. I was afraid."

"'T is all right if you don't have to leave me," Nora assured her, patting her shoulder lovingly.

"You are so good to me, and I love you, Nonie, with all my heart," Bébée sobbed. "I was afraid you would tell me to go away, and never look at me again."

"I never want you to go away, dearie," Nora answered, and then, for a minute or two they clasped each other as tightly as they could and cried in each other's arms.

Suddenly Nora bethought herself of Bébée's action in the hall just before the fire was discovered by Mammy.

"Bébée dear," she whispered. "Did you have a candle too?"

"Yes," sobbed Bébée.

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"Then you must go and put it out," Nora said, hurriedly.

"I did n't light it," Bébée answered, sitting up and wiping her face. "I knew at once what he wanted to do when I went into the room. I've smelt stuff like that before. Oh, Nonie, will it ever stop? Always, wherever we go, there is a fire sooner or later, and that's why I knew what would happen when I smelt that smell." Then, a new thought coming to her, she looked at Nora in amazement. "But, Nonie, how did *you* know about the candle?"

"Because I had one," Nora answered. "It was my candle that set fire to room number 56."

"And do you have to work for him, too?" Bébée asked, aghast. "Poor Nonie," she added, "I am so sorry," and she leaned forward and kissed Nora lovingly.

"I did n't *have* to do it," Nora explained, "but he took me for you one day, and he promised he would never bother you again if I lit the candle. And I could n't see what harm it would do."

"Then you don't know him?" asked Bébée.

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"No, except that I 've seen him and that I knew you were afraid of him," Nora answered. "Who is he, dear?" she added.

Bébée looked at Nora with a pitiable expression of pain and fear on her face.

"Don't ask me, Nonie," she pleaded, "I could n't tell you even if I wanted to."

She was so pathetic in her distress that Nora forgot everything but her desire to comfort her.

"Don't worry any more about it, dear," she murmured, drawing Bébée close to her and pressing her head down on her shoulder. "Let's forget all about this dreadful night and go to bed. Come," and she led Bébée into the bedroom.

It was a long time before they went to sleep. They lay in each other's arms, whispering together and going over and over again the events that had just passed; but Nora, though she would have given almost anything to know more of Bébée's relations with the strange man, held her tongue on that subject. She expected that morning would bring a full explanation, but she dared not let her mind dwell upon the outcome, and

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soothed her anxieties with the thought that Mr. O'Neil had said he would buy off all claims to the child.

"You are still my Bébée," she whispered, as they kissed each other good night for the last time.

"And I love you, Nonie, with all my heart," answered Bébée.

Meanwhile Mr. O'Neil and Mr. Stetson were also discussing the mysterious Mr. Hitchens.

"My daughter says she saw him a number of times in the hotel," Mr. O'Neil remarked.

Mr. Stetson thought a minute and then, sending for a clerk, put some questions to him.

"The man in number 56 registered in the hotel under the name of Hitchens," Mr. Stetson said after this interview. "When he first came here we inquired his business and he said he was an agent of yours."

"Of mine!" cried Mr. O'Neil in astonishment. Mr. Stetson nodded.

"We knew, of course, Mr. O'Neil, that you had many dealings with the government; and this

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fellow said it must not be known that there was any connection between you. The relation was to be kept secret. This did not seem altogether unreasonable. In fact, we thought it quite likely you would need such an agent near you. For the first two or three days we had him watched pretty carefully, and I was a little surprised that you did n't speak of him to me. However, he was seen quite often talking to little Bébée and also to your daughter. Then, too, he was observed to go to your rooms and enter without knocking, so that we were entirely satisfied things were as he said. Evidently the man was a Southern spy."

"Well, that beats all!" exclaimed Mr. O'Neil. "He was stealin' official letters when he came to my parlor, and when he talked to the girls he was doin' his best to intimidate 'em. Ah, bad cess to a fella like that! I'd love to have me hands on him, but 't is n't likely now. The city will be too hot for the likes of him after to-day. The poor children! Think of him playin' on 'em that way. It rouses all the Irish in me."

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"What I can't understand," said Mr. Stetson, "is why the girls didn't say something about him?"

"There's reasons for that, too," said Mr. O'Neil and this set him wondering once more over the cable message from Lady Castleton.

In truth Mr. O'Neil had thought of little else since the message came, and the more he dwelt on it the more he was convinced that Lady Castleton's surmise was correct. The fact that the chain which had been around Bébée's neck had belonged to the missing child was well-nigh conclusive. But there were many other circumstances that pointed in the same direction, now that his attention had been called to the possibility.

First of all, she had come from the South. Well, Dennis Burke, the man with whom Patricia Cochrane was left by her father, lived in Georgia. Then there was the coat of arms. He had pooh-poohed the matter when Nora said Bébée thought she had seen it before, but it was probably on things belonging to her mother that

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she had seen it. It was a small matter, but straws show the way the wind blows. And, more than all else, there was the absence of any inquiry or hint of a search being made for the child.

Nor was this theory in conflict with the other that Bébée's father was the mysterious man who had been trying to burn the hotel and steal his letters. Lady Castleton had said the fellow was worthless. He was likely to have a dozen names, Hitchens as well as Cochrane, which would go far to explain Bébée's refusal to acknowledge a family name. The poor child probably did n't know what she would be called next. And what was more reasonable than to believe that when Cochrane had discovered with whom his daughter was living in New York he had been too weak to resist the temptation to make use of her. Mr. O'Neil was willing to acquit the man of deliberately sending the child on such an errand and exposing her to such risks. But having left her with Dennis Burke in Georgia, and coming suddenly upon her here in New York, it was

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not improbable that the rascal had taken quick advantage of the situation.

How the child came North was as yet a mystery, but there seemed no doubt that Bébée was Patricia Cochrane. And it was amazing to Mr. O'Neil that while he and many others in his employ, had been searching the country over for the child, the little girl was living in his own home. It was almost too romantic, and Mr. O'Neil shook his head frequently, as he thrashed the matter over.

Through all his thoughts what troubled him most was the dread of what would happen when he broke the news to Nora.

"Poor little Nonie!" he murmured over and over again, knowing that sooner or later he must cause her deep sorrow. It was n't a matter of money any more. Had it been, he would have given all he had without a pang to have kept the child. They could have been happy even though they were poor. But that was out of the question now. He had a very tender recollection of the Miss Eileen of his boyhood days, indeed the

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only ray of sunshine in the gloom ahead of him was the remembrance that she would be made happy.

"But Nonie, poor little Nonie!" how would she bear it? What would she do without this little girl who had come so strangely into her life and gained such a large place in her affections?

"'T will break Nonie's heart," he muttered to himself, "and I'll be grievin' for her, too," he added, realizing suddenly how much he would miss Bébée's childish voice calling, "Uncle Tim."

"But still we *might* be mistaken," he said to himself, although he had given up all such hopes. "Before I tell Nonie 't is best to make certain. At any rate I'll tax the child with it before I say a word."

This much determined, Mr. O'Neil only waited to make assurance doubly sure until he and Bébée were alone together. He thought many times over just how he should put his questions to her. He wanted to surprise her if possible, for he realized she would not have kept silent so long and avoided all hints of her past without special

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reasons. On the other hand, he did not wish to shock her nor hurt her in any way, so after a good deal of arguing with himself back and forth, he decided that he would ask her something about this Dennis Burke with whom, according to Lady Castleton, she had been living. That would be sufficiently surprising to cause her to betray herself, while if he spoke her father's name, or called her "Patricia Cochrane" to her face the shock might be too hard on the child. Mr. O'Neil did not disguise from himself the fact that he, as well as Nonie, loved Bébée, and his task was far from pleasant to his tender heart.

The opportunity came the next day. Nora was out of the room and Bébée was busy writing at the table near him.

Mr. O'Neil was in his favorite chair and, after much hesitation, he screwed his courage up to the point of speaking to her. He would have given anything to avoid it, but that seemed impossible.

"Bébée, me dear," he said gently, "come over here. I want to talk to you a minute."

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"Yes, Uncle Tim," she answered brightly, and laying down her pencil she went to him with a smile of pleasure.

He took her by the arms and drew her between his knees.

"Bébée," he began in his gentlest voice, "I've been wonderin' lately if you could tell me aught of a Mr. Dennis Burke of Georgia?"

As he said the name Bébée grew white and shrank back, with wide staring eyes of fear and apprehension. It seemed a long time to Mr. O'Neil that she stood rigid, gazing at him. Then suddenly she put her hands over her face and broke into passionate weeping.

"Then you know? You know?" she burst out.

"Yes, me dear, I know," answered Mr. O'Neil, and reached out to take her in his arms, but she pulled herself away and rushed out of the room, crying bitterly.

CHAPTER XXIV

BEBEE DISAPPEARS

MR. O'NEIL did not know how long he sat staring at the fire after Bébée left him. Her pale, drawn little face stayed in his memory and made him very unhappy. The thought that he had been the cause of her distress affected him deeply, although he told himself again and again that he could not have foreseen the result. Mr. O'Neil was a kindly man who would not have hurt any one intentionally, much less a child, and least of all Bébée whom he had come to love dearly.

But of one thing there remained no doubt in his mind. Why she was so much concerned over the mere mention of Dennis Burke he could not explain; but it was perfectly plain that she knew him, and therefore it became a certainty that Lady

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Castleton was correct in her surmise that Bébé was the missing child.

It was a sad business for Mr. O'Neil but the worst was still before him. He had to tell Nora that she must prepare herself, sooner or later, to say good-by to Bébé.

He was brought back to his surroundings by hearing a door open and then the voice of Nora calling.

"Daddy!" she exclaimed, coming quickly across the room to him, "what is the matter with Bébé? She is lying on the bed sobbing and crying, and I cannot comfort her. Won't you come in and—" but she stopped, seeing in her father's face something that made her heart give a jump of apprehension.

"What is it, Daddy?" she half whispered, coming closer to him.

"Here, darlin'," he said, holding out his arms to her. "Me heart is sore for what I have to tell ye."

Nora let herself be settled in his lap without a word, all the while looking searchingly into her

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father's face as if trying to read there some little hope. She guessed what was coming. The hour which she had been dreading had arrived. She felt a little numb as she sat and waited for the words that were to rend her heart.

"Ye guess what 't is about, dear," Mr. O'Neil began, scarcely knowing how to break the news to her.

"Yes, Daddy," she answered.

"Well, 't is good news for her, anyway, and that you'll be glad of," he went on. "Do ye mind the little chain she had around her neck? The one ye slipped the ring on the night of the riots? A little gold chain ye said it was. Do ye mind? I never saw it."

"Yes, Daddy," she repeated.

"Well, what do ye think has happened?" he went on, falteringly. "Sure ye could never guess. Nobody could, but, oh, Nonie darlin', 't is that little chain has found Bébée her mother."

"Who is she?" asked Nora, with unexpected interest.

"'T is my Miss Eileen," he answered. "Lady

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Castleton's niece, ye mind. I 've a message from her sayin' she is comin'."

Nora did not move for some moments; then her eyes filled with great tears that rolled down her cheeks unheeded.

"Ah, Daddy," she sobbed, "ye can't buy *her* off, can ye?"

"Me darlin'!" cried Mr. O'Neil, the tears coming into his own eyes, "if money would do it they might have every penny I have in the world. 'T would be no hardship for your old father to get to work again, with a pick and shovel if need be, to make ye happy. Oh, Nonie, Nonie, if your poor mother was only here to comfort ye! A man's but poor consolation in times like this."

Nora lifted herself suddenly and put her hands on her father's face, looking at him with brimming eyes.

"Don't say that, Daddy!" she exclaimed and all her heart was in the words. "There is no father like ye in all the world and I love you enough for both father and mother. 'T is me that knows

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your heart aches, and sure 't is an ungrateful girl I am with all the things ye give me and all ye do for me, to cry for what I can't have. But oh, Daddy, I do love her so, and—and you love her too, don't ye, Daddy?"

"Aye," he answered, with a catch in his throat, "I do that! 'T will be mighty lonesome not hearin' the little thing callin' 'Uncle Tim.' "

"Won't it?" Nora murmured through her tears. "'T is that will be the hardest to bear, not havin' her here to care for. Oh, Daddy, Daddy!"

She buried her head against his shoulder and burst into a fresh fit of sobbing while Mr. O'Neil tried his best to comfort her with gentle pats of sympathy.

The light had gone and the room was nearly dark. The small fire burning in the grate glowed cheerfully and illuminated the chair and its occupants dimly. Nora, controlling her sobs after a time, lay quietly, as if her emotion had left her without any desire to move. Mr. O'Neil sat holding her tightly, seeking in vain to find a way to console her. Except for the low rumble of

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the traffic outside coming to them in a muffled hum the room was silent.

Suddenly Nora straightened up.

"Daddy," she said loudly, "why should Bébée be crying so, and why should she seem afraid?"

"'T is a thing I've been puzzlin' me head over," her father answered, "and there's but one reason for it that I can see, though I'd made up me mind that 't was her own father was settin' her on to do his dirty work. The man that's tormented her and you must be Dennis Burke, though he calls himself Hitchens. She's afraid we'll turn her over to him I misdoubt."

"Oh, the poor lamb," cried Nora, getting to her feet. "Sure you've hit it, Daddy, and I've been lettin' her stay in there all alone, and she fearin' for her life, maybe. Poor Bébée, poor little Bébée!" She was at the door of their bedroom ere she finished, and Mr. O'Neil heard her call the child's name as she entered.

The door stood open and the sudden glow in the room showed Mr. O'Neil that she had lighted the gas. He sat quietly, picturing to himself the

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two little girls in each other's arms, his own Nora playing the mother and, in spite of the pain in her own heart, doing the best she could to ease the fear and anguish of her cherished friend.

Suddenly a cry rang out that brought him to his feet in an instant.

"Oh, Daddy, Daddy, come to me!" And he hurried as fast as his lame leg would let him, into the adjoining room.

"What is it, dearie?" he called as he ran.

He found Nora crumpled up on the floor in front of the bureau and, as he hastened to her, she held up a coarse piece of wrapping-paper on which he could see that something was written. He fumbled about for his glasses, a little fearful of what was coming, and, after adjusting them, he read the following note:—

"Dearest Nonie, please give my love to Uncle Tim and tell him I have gone away. I think he would not like to send me away so I am going myself. I have a lot of money he gave me and I am wearing my thick coat and rubber shoes so as not to worry you. Please excuse this paper. It is all I can find now. Your loving Bébée.

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"P.S. Nonie, I shall always love you and I have tot you all the English I know. Good-by and thank you and Uncle Tim for being so good to me. I think this is a very cruel world."

Mr. O'Neil finished the pathetic little note with difficulty. A mist would come before his eyes as he read between the lines, but at length he reached the end and stooping down he lifted his daughter to her feet.

"Don't grieve, dearie," he said, with all the confidence he could put into the words. "I'll have her back in no time. The poor baby is under some misapprehension. Come and help your daddy to find her."

At the thought that there was something to be done, Nora roused herself and controlled her sobbing.

"We must hurry, Daddy," she cried, and she ran into the other room and pulled at the bell-rope to summon one of the hotel boys.

But Mr. O'Neil did not wait. He hastened to the office to make inquiries in person and to set

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in motion the machinery for finding the child speedily.

It was plain that she had quitted the bedroom by the door leading directly into the hall, but where she had gone then remained a mystery. The hope that some of the hotel employees would have noticed her was doomed to be disappointed, for she had not been seen to leave the Astor House; and, once on the street, the fast-gathering darkness of the short autumn day had probably hidden her from chance observers.

Mr. Stetson responded heartily to Mr. O'Neil's appeal for help, but absolutely nothing resulted from their inquiries within the hotel.

It then became a matter for special detectives and the police, and orders were issued to search the town while, at the same time, at Nora's suggestion, a hunt was made for the old mammy, or Mandy Mandlebaum as she called herself.

This was really a practical plan and proved to be a correct surmise as to where Bébée had gone, but when they came to inquire just where the old negress lived, it was found that neither

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Nora nor Mr. O'Neil knew. All they could tell was that she roomed with a Mrs. Mandlebaum somewhere uptown.

With only this clue much precious time was lost, and it was not until the evening of the next day that the place was located. Then the information gathered there showed that they were too late.

A little girl had come there the previous night looking for the old negress and, after they had talked together for an hour or so, Mammy had paid Mrs. Mandlebaum what she owed her and the two had departed with all the old woman's possessions done up in a bundle.

"I 's just 'cided I 'd betta be movin' into largeh quarters, ma'am," was all the information Mammy had vouchsafed, and then they had gone out into the darkness and disappeared.

The next few days passed most dismally for Mr. O'Neil and Nora. It was bad enough for her to have to give Bébée up to Lady Castleton, but this uncertainty as to where the child was or what might have befallen her was much worse.

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Nora was the constant prey of her imagination and she wore herself out with apprehension.

Mr. O'Neil, of course, did his best to cheer her and encourage a belief that sooner or later Bébée would be brought back.

"It just can't be that we won't find her," he repeated continually, till at last Nora, nervous, and hardly herself, answered fretfully:

"You're a poor one at findin' people, Daddy. Now, if only Johnny Clancy was here, he'd—"

"We'll have him," answered Mr. O'Neil and forthwith sent off a telegram to his boarding-school commanding that young man's presence at once.

Johnny came, glad of the freedom, and putting on the oldest suit of clothes he had, went out into the street a newsboy once more, confident that he would find the missing child.

Mr. O'Neil neglected all his business and devoted himself to Nora. For hours she would sit beside him, staring straight ahead of her but listening all the while for footsteps coming toward their door, hoping against hope that a favorable

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report would be brought to them. At each knock on the door she would sit straight and rigid, her eyes fastened on the face of the messenger, every muscle in her body tense with anxiety.

"Well, what news?" Mr. O'Neil would demand, when one of the men he had employed, or a police officer entered. "What news? What news?" His question was rough and irritable, for he, too, was feeling the strain of waiting.

And the reply was always a fresh disappointment. There was no trace of the child or the old negro woman after they had left Mrs. Mandelbaum's house.

Mr. O'Neil would tell the man to go on with the search, and when the door closed he and Nora would settle back again with a sigh to their endless, nerve-racking waiting.

When they talked it was always of Bébée.

"Do ye mind the cunnin' ways she had of tellin' us our mistakes in English, Daddy?" Nora would ask softly, almost as if she were thinking out loud.

"Aye, that I do," he would reply. "She was a

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great hand at the English, though at times I did n't catch her meanin'."

"We must try to be thinkin' of those things, Daddy—I mean papa," Nora murmured. "We must be tryin' to speak the way she'd want us to. Seems kind of mean not to, when her back's turned, as ye might say."

"Aye! Aye!" answered Mr. O'Neil with a great sigh. "But 't is the merry laugh of her I'm missin'. 'T was like a baby's, it was that innocent."

"She loved you, Daddy—I mean—but how can I think of words when me heart is achin' for the sight of her?" and Nora would hide her face and let the tears come.

They became more and more hopeless as days passed without trace of the fugitives. Johnny Clancy had no luck at all, and though he always insisted that he would find her "that day," he would come in at night shaking his head, till finally Nora said he was no better at "findin' people" than her father, and Johnny was sent back to school.

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And all the while the ship that Lady Castleton was on, was nearing port and Mr. O'Neil began to worry on her account also.

"'T is a queer thing that now we know who she is, we must go and lose her. I don't know what I'll be sayin' to Lady Castleton when she comes in askin' for her grandniece. And maybe Miss Eileen will be with her, beggin' Tim O'Neil for her child, and he not able to give it."

"'T is very queer," Nora would agree, "and you with all your detectives and spies lookin' for her, and she sittin' here the while callin' out 'Uncle Tim,' in the cute way she had."

"Why, there's men down South, searchin' for the child this minute!" Mr. O'Neil answered. "I've had them all through the country, goin' where they could without meeting up with the armies. There's many a one down there now I could n't find to stop if I wanted to. 'T is like a miracle when I think of it, and her gone."

At the end of a week Nora seemed to give up all hope that Bébé would ever return and began to speak of the child as if she were dead. This

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distressed Mr. O'Neil mightily, and he tried his best to counteract the idea but with little success. One day, however, as they were sitting together, a thought came into his mind.

"Nonie dear," he said, "do ye mind the fortune-tellin' we had with the tea that day a long while back?"

"Yes, Daddy, 't was old Mammy that told it," she answered, showing an immediate interest.

"And do ye mind me tryin' to separate the two tea leaves," he went on. "How I stirred the tea and—"

"Oh!" Nora cried, clasping her hands together excitedly, "Mandy said you would separate us, but only for a little while. You remember the leaves came together again?"

"Aye, I recollect," he answered, "and 't was me separated ye, after all, though 't was no wish of mine, dear."

"Oh, I know that, Daddy. Sure you could n't have known, but suppose it comes true, Daddy? Suppose—"

A knock at the door interrupted her.

BEBEE DISAPPEARS

"Mr. Stetson sent this up to you, sir," said the boy, handing Mr. O'Neil a note. "He says, please, sir, what does it mean?"

Mr. O'Neil took the letter and putting on his glasses read it to himself.

"That will do," he said to the boy. "I'll see Mr. Stetson later."

When the boy was gone he handed the note to Nora and she read as follows:

"Please send any letters for Eleanor O'Neil to the General Delivery. Washington, D. C."

"'T is Bébée wrote that!" exclaimed Nora, her eyes wide with excitement.

"So I was thinkin'," agreed Mr. O'Neil, "but what can she be wantin' with your letters?"

"I don't know, Daddy," said Nora, walking restlessly about the room. "I don't know what it can mean, but I'm sure it's something, and—and—" she stopped out of breath.

"I can't make it out," said Mr. O'Neil, puzzled.

"Nor I," agreed Nora, "but one thing is certain. Bébée is in Washington, and we must do something right away."

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"But what?" asked Mr. O'Neil with a wrinkled brow.

Another knock on the door broke in upon their talk and this time a telegram was handed to Mr. O'Neil.

"Listen to this, Nonie!" he cried, as he glanced through it,

"Patricia Cochrane is found have her in Washington awaiting instructions. Walker."

"Hurray! Nonie darlin', Little Bébée's found at last!"

For a moment Nora could n't speak; then with a cry of joy she threw her arms around her father and the two danced up and down.

"I'll send for her at once," he said, starting to the table with the intention of writing out a message.

"Daddy!" exclaimed Nora running to him, "why can't we go to her? Sure, I'd be crazy waitin'."

Mr. O'Neil looked down at her thoughtfully.

"Now that's not such a bad idea, either," he

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agreed. "They 're wantin' me in Washington these last ten days, and I was lettin' 'em want."

He turned to the boy energetically.

"Get me an Appleton's Railway Guide, and call Miss Nora's governess and have William ready with the carriage and send a bell-boy and—and, hurry now. We 're going to Washington on the next train."

CHAPTER XXV

THE LITTLE LADY IS FOUND

IT was not until they were settled in the train and speeding across the dismal flats of New Jersey that Nora and her father again had an opportunity to sit quietly for a moment. From the instant the telegram had come until they reached the ferry-boat at Cortland Street it had been one mad rush against time; but they caught the train, though William had galloped his horses through the streets at imminent risk of being arrested for reckless driving.

Nora beamed upon every one. For the first time in many, many days her heart was light, and she could have sung with joy had she not been so intent upon catching that first train to Washington.

Mr. O'Neil had requested Mr. Stetson to in-

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form Lady Castleton on her arrival of the events which had taken place, with the suggestion that she should await their return to New York. He had also telegraphed the man Walker, who had sent the welcome message that he had found Patricia, to meet them at the train, so that there would be no delay.

Of course under all the excitement of finding the child again there remained the fact that Lady Castleton would take her away sooner or later, but Nora had been so anxious and unhappy that the prospect of seeing Bébée once more now put all other thoughts in the background.

"And to think that message should have come while we was talkin' over that fortune!" said Mr. O'Neil. "Sure it almost makes one believe there's somethin' in these teacup prophecies."

"Of course there is," declared Nora. "It was as plain as plain, and—"

"Aye, that's so," interrupted Mr. O'Neil thoughtfully. "And we've found the child, praise be."

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There was not much more to say to each other, so Mr. O'Neil took up the newspaper he had bought and opened it.

"'T is the first chance I've had to see what's goin' on for this long while," he said. "Somehow I had n't the heart to read—but now—well, let's see what's become of Sherman?"

The paper rustled and Nora turned and looked out of the window, seeing little but happy in a sort of dreamy expectation.

"Here's good news!" she heard her father exclaim. "Old Uncle Billy's safe. He's come out after all these weeks since he disappeared after Atlanta. 'T is a grand march he has made to the sea and he's cut the South in the middle. It says here that the Johnny Rebs claim he carried duplicate bridges with him, so it made no odds whether they burned those ahead of him or not. Some says he carried duplicate tunnels as well, but I'm kind o' doubtin' that."

He chuckled to himself, finding great pleasure in being able to joke a little with Nora.

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"Do ye think she 'll be changed any, Daddy?" asked Nora with a smile for the joke, but her thoughts far ahead in Washington.

"Not a bit of it," he answered. "But as I was about to tell ye, Sherman gave the country a scare, and I 'm not knowin' another man who could have done the trick, no, not General Grant himself. His army moved in four columns, coverin' sixty miles of country where every man, woman an' child was hostile to 'em, an' he took 'em safe to Savannah, an' soon he 'll have the city itself, if he has n't took it already."

"She 'll be glad to see us, Daddy," said Nora beaming at the prospect.

"She will that. 'T is a loyal, lovin' heart she has. But can ye think of nothin' else, Nonie dear? 'T will make the time seem so long. Don't ye be takin' any interest in the war? Sure, there are things goin' on that 'll surprise ye."

"There's only one thing I can think of, Daddy," she answered, but her face was happy. They sped across New Jersey between frozen

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fields of scrubby woods, and crossed the Delaware at Trenton, then on, through Pennsylvania till they reached Philadelphia.

Here they made a lengthy stop and changed cars, and, just as they were expecting the train to start, a messenger-boy came into the car calling, "Mr. O'Neil! Mr. Timothy O'Neil!" at the top of his lungs.

Mr. O'Neil halted him and, after identifying himself by letters in his pocket, a telegram was given to him which he read hastily and handed to Nora, while every one in the car looked on with keen curiosity.

"Hold up!" he called to the boy who was starting away. "There's an answer must be sent."

"Hurry, sir," replied the boy, handing Mr. O'Neil a blank. "The train's about to go," and as if to emphasize his warning the car gave a preliminary jerk.

Mr. O'Neil wrote as fast as he could, but the train was drawing away from the platform when he finished. Taking a greenback from his pocket he gave that and the message to the boy.

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"Ye've no time to waste," he cried. "Send that, and keep the change."

"Thank you, sir," said the boy, seeming now not to be in the slightest hurry. "Thank you," he went on, taking off his cap with great deliberation and putting the message inside it.

"Hurry and get off the train," commanded Mr. O'Neil nervously. "Do ye want to be killed?"

The boy looked at him indulgently.

"Give me regards to Father Abraham when ye get to Washington," he said coolly, and then, without any appearance of haste, he strolled to the front of the car and swung off in a cloud of dust.

Mr. O'Neil leaned out of the window.

"The limb!" he exclaimed when he pulled his head inside. "He's goin' up the platform whistlin' 'We are comin', Father Abraham,' as if he'd just hopped out of a baby-carriage. 'T is twenty times a day, Nonie, I bless the hour you was born a girl and not a boy."

"But what does this telegram mean?" she asked, holding the paper out to him.

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"I've no idea," he answered slowly, and then he read it aloud thoughtfully, "'Man here insists must have address of Eleanor O'Neil wire instructions. Stetson.' I don't make it out and they may have mixed it up in some way. No doubt 't is me they want. At any rate I sent them the name of our hotel in Washington."

"And will the man come to Washington?" asked Nora.

"How can I tell?" her father answered. "There's hundreds of fellas tryin' to sell the government all sorts of things all the time. They bother the life out of me. This fella may be wantin' to furnish the army with a patent self-washin' shirt. Don't worry your head over it, me dear. I don't. If I did I'd be gray-headed before me time."

"But you are gray-headed, Daddy," said Nora with a laugh.

"Ah ha!" laughed Mr. O'Neil, "that sounds like me old Nora again."

As they neared their journey's end Nora could hardly wait for the train to get in. Her eager-

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ness was pathetic. She had to hold tight to her father to keep from jumping up and down with impatience.

"Oh, the old train goes so slowly!" she complained time and again. "Will we never get there?"

"Soon now, dearie. Soon now," Mr. O'Neil would answer and she would sit quiet for a while, clutching his arm convulsively.

At last they reached Washington and the train stopped with a thump, but it had hardly come to a standstill before Nora was out on the platform looking up and down for Bébée.

"I can't see her, Daddy," she cried as her father stepped down beside her.

"Perhaps they are outside," Mr. O'Neil suggested, and they hurried as fast as they could up the long platform.

Halfway to the front of the station they were stopped by a shrewd-looking young man who took off his hat and bowed.

"Mr. O'Neil?" he questioned.

"Yes, that 's me," was the answer.

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"I'm Walker, sir, got your telegram and—"

"Where is she?" demanded Nora. "Oh, tell me where she is."

The man looked down at her in surprise.

"You mean the little girl?" he asked.

"Sure! You've got her, haven't ye?" Mr. O'Neil's voice was harsh and impatient.

"Oh, yes, sir. She's waiting at Willard's Hotel with her black mammy," the man answered.

"Oh, Mammy's there too!" exclaimed Nora.

"Why did n't you bring her here with you?"

"I did n't understand that she was to come," the man replied. "I thought you just wanted me to meet the train."

"Well, it's all right if she is at the hotel," said Mr. O'Neil, "but I'll feel safer when I see her. She's apt to disappear, that child is, when ye least expect it."

"Oh, she'll be there, Mr. O'Neil," said the man, reassuringly. "No fear of her going away. She seems very glad to have been found."



"Neither of them resembled . . . Bébée or her Mammy"

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"Well, I hope so," Mr. O'Neil began, but Nora cut him short.

"Come! Hurry!" she cried. "Let's get a hack right away."

They drove through the squalid outskirts of Washington, and along mud-filled streets whose plank sidewalks were lined with shacks and hovels standing side by side with substantial wooden houses. But Mr. O'Neil and Nora hardly observed these things. They were intent upon reaching the hotel as soon as possible and when at length they arrived, they wasted no time in preliminaries.

"Take us directly to the child," commanded Mr. O'Neil. "I'll see about our rooms later."

They climbed one flight of stairs and then traversed a long corridor to the extreme rear of the building.

"They're here," said Walker, knocking at the door of a room.

"Come in," came the summons.

With a little cry of delight and expectation,

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Nora sprang in front of the men and, opening the door, ran into the room.

"Where are you, dearie?" she called joyously, and then stopped abruptly.

Before her, sitting in a chair, very erect and quite prim, was a sweet-faced little girl and behind the chair stood a kindly old darky woman, but neither of them resembled, in the faintest degree, Bébée or her mammy.

Nora looked around the room wildly, then faced the child.

"Who are you?" she demanded in a voice, strange even to her own ears.

The child rose to her feet and made a little courtesy.

"I am Patricia Cochrane," she said sweetly.

With a cry of pain and disappointment Nora turned and flung herself upon her father.

"It's all a mistake, Daddy! All a mistake! Take me away!"

CHAPTER XXVI

MR. WALKER EXPLAINS

MR. O'NEIL gathered Nora up in his arms and carried her out into the hall.

"Find out where me rooms are," he ordered Walker, who had followed in a bewildered fashion; and the secret agent, although he had no idea what it all meant, was swift to do the errand and was back very quickly with the keys.

Her father carried Nora in and laid her on the couch.

"Ye can go," he said, in a dead level voice. "I'll see you later, Walker," he added, and the man left the two alone.

With the gentleness of a woman, Mr. O'Neil took off Nora's hat and coat. Then, covering her with a quilt from his own bed, he drew up a chair and sat down beside her taking one of her hands and stroking it gently.

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He had no words of comfort. There was nothing he could find to say, but he hoped to ease the child's suffering by just being there with her. Nora lay perfectly numb; her eyes were open but she saw nothing, though she knew that her daddy was beside her and once or twice gave the hand that held hers a slight pressure of appreciation, but the unexpectedness of the shock had stunned her and she could not even cry.

As time went on, however, she began to recover somewhat and her thoughts took shape.

"Daddy," she whispered, "it was a mistake."

"Aye, me darlin', a grievous mistake. The man's a fool!"

"How could he have taken that girl for Bébée?" she said, and laughed a little sadly at the thought. "She's a little lady, but she does n't look at all like—" She stopped as if the effort of talking was too much for her.

"How about bed, darlin'?" her father asked. "Shall your old daddy put you to bed like he used to do when ye was but so high?" He held his hand a foot or two above the floor.

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Nora sat up suddenly on the sofa and pushed the tumbled hair back from her face with both hands.

"I don't want to go to bed, Daddy," she said. "I would like to talk to that Mr. Walker. I'd like to know how he made the mistake." She paused a moment. "But, Daddy," she broke out suddenly, "the child said *her* name was Patricia Cochrane! That's the girl Lady Castleton's lookin' for, and—and—it's we've made the mistake, Daddy!" she exclaimed, and rising to her feet she ran across the floor and pulled at the bell rope feverishly.

"What are you thinking of, Nonie?" Mr. O'Neil asked, not liking this feverish energy on her part.

"I want to see Mr. Walker," she said, and a moment later when the boy came to the door, she gave her order in no uncertain manner. It seemed as if a new Nora had suddenly come into existence—a Nora full of a new idea that held out a promise of unexpected happiness.

The detective came in, looking wholly bewil-

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dered at the new turn of events. He could n't invent a theory to fit the case, so he had made what provision was necessary for the comfort of his charges and then awaited a summons from Mr. O'Neil.

He took a chair with the air of a man who is ready to be cross-examined and who, though he did n't like it particularly, knew that it was a part of what he was paid for and was resigned. But there was nothing of that kind awaiting him.

"Won't you please tell us, Mr. Walker, where you found the little girl?" Nora asked, seating herself opposite him and looking up into his face.

"'T is n't much of a story, miss," he answered. "It took a good while to find her, but that 's only on account of the war. People down in Georgia either talk a good deal more than they should or they don't say anything, these days. You see the majority of them were secessionists all right, but there are some who believe in the Union and, as a matter of fact, they 've been having a little

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war of their own down there that no one hears very much about outside of the State.”¹

“Yes, I understand,” Nora interrupted, patiently, “but what we would like to know is, are you sure this little girl is Patricia Cochrane?”

“Oh, there’s not the least doubt about *that*,” Mr. Walker affirmed. “I went first to Carstairs, Georgia, hoping to learn something of the child’s father, but he had joined the Southern army, leaving the little girl with the Dennis Burke you heard of. Now Burke was a Union man, and that’s enough to tell you that he was well hated in Georgia, or anywhere else in the South for that matter. No one had a good word to say for him. They called him a traitor to his State and drove him out of the town. And, not satisfied with that, they burned his house down, scattered

¹ The greatest sufferers from the war were the Union sympathizers in Tennessee and Northern Georgia whose homes were ravaged by volunteers and by the rebel army.

The above is information gained from a history of the Civil War. However, there is something to be said on the other side. The Southern sympathizers who lived along the Hudson have their own tale to tell of ostracism, if not of actual abuse.—E. B. K.

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his plantation hands, and not a trace of his family could I come by for a long time."

"But the child! Tell me of her!" exclaimed Nora impatiently.

"Well, I finally discovered that she had been taken in by some people called Rathbone," Walker continued. "But they were suspected of having Northern sympathies, too, so they moved out very quietly to Mrs. Rathbone's father's place, about twenty miles across country and stayed there. They kept the Cochrane child with them, and you can understand they were n't making any noise about it and were staying pretty well hidden. That's what made it so hard to find them. But once I got on their track there was no further trouble and Mr. Rathbone gave me all the facts. There's no doubt that the child is Patricia Cochrane, and if it had n't been for the war we would have found her without the least difficulty."

"She seems to have been mixed up with a queer crowd," said Mr. O'Neil thoughtfully.

"It depends upon where you're living," Walker

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explained. "This Burke, for instance, was out and out for the Union, so you can't trust what they say of him in the South. That's the whole story. I thought you'd like to have the child up here as soon as possible, so I wasted no time. I brought her old mammy along, thinking the little girl might need some attention I could n't give. She's a real little lady, and does what she's told without making any fuss about it."

They discussed the matter a little further, but Nora was plainly impatient for the man to be gone.

It was arranged that he should take Patricia to New York on the first train in the morning and go directly to the Astor House to await Lady Castleton's arrival.

"She may be there before ye," said Mr. O'Neil, "but if she is n't, you stay till she comes. I'll send a message to Mr. Stetson." And in a few minutes Mr. Walker left them.

No sooner had the door closed than Nora turned excitedly to her father.

"Where's that letter, Daddy?" she exclaimed.

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"What letter?" asked Mr. O'Neil, puzzled.

"The one Bébée wrote from here," she said, impatiently.

"Oh, now I mind." He fumbled in his pocket and brought it out. "Here it is," he added, giving it to her.

"Please send any letters for Eleanor O'Neil to the General Delivery, Washington, D. C.," she read slowly, then looking up at her father, she went on: "I don't know, quite, what it means or why she should want to get my letters, but Bébée's here in Washington and she's just our Bébée and not Patricia anybody."

Mr. O'Neil took the letter and scrutinized it carefully, beginning to feel something of the excitement Nora was showing.

"I think there's no doubt of that," he said, guardedly, "but I'm not going to be in any hurry to jump to conclusions again."

"But she must be here, Daddy," Nora insisted, determined not to let him throw cold water on her new hopes. "She must be here and we must find her."

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"Oh, we'll find her, dearie," he answered, "but 't will take time."

"But she's here in this city now!" exclaimed Nora. "Think of it, Daddy, right near to us, maybe, and I—I can't see her. Oh, Bébée, me dear, why did ye ever leave your Nonie?"

The shock of her disappointment and the strain of the last week had told on her and the tears that had been held back began to flow again.

"Now, Nonie dear, don't be cryin' when we see a break in the clouds," begged her father, patting her soothingly. "I'll find her for ye, and never fear."

"Ah, Daddy," she answered mournfully, "ye never were any good at findin' people."

"Now don't be sayin' that," he replied, pretending that his feelings were much hurt. "Did n't I find little Patricia? And have ye been thinkin' what it means to dicover that Bébée is n't Miss Eileen's child?"

"Yes, Daddy, I have," answered Nora, brightening perceptibly and drying her eyes. "Sure in

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a way 't is something to be thankful for that we *did n't* find her, is n't it, Daddy?"

"It is that!" he answered heartily. "When we get the child, we 'll make sure to keep her, hey?"

"Oh, if we only could!" exclaimed Nora. "Perhaps, Daddy, after all you can pay her father, or whoever owns her, to give her up. I did ask for a little slave, but 't is not a slave I 'm wantin' now, and 't would be worth somethin' big to have her always."

"No money shall stand in the way of our havin' her, but we 'll talk of what we 'll be doin' in the mornin'. You 'd better be goin' to bed."

"'T is good advice," she agreed readily, lifting up her face to be kissed. "I 'll go and get a good rest. 'T is some comfort to know I 'm near her. Good-night, Daddy dear," and she smiled bravely.

"Good-night, me darlin'," he replied, bending down and kissing her, "'t is the stout heart ye have, and please God ye 'll not be so sore disappointed again. Good night and to-morrow we 'll be startin' fresh."

CHAPTER XXVII

A TRAITOR AND A RENEGADE

THE next morning Nora and Mr. O'Neil made the acquaintance of little Patricia and saw her party safely into the bus as they went off to take the train to New York.

"She's a real little lady," said Nora, as they sat down to breakfast.

"She is that!" returned Mr. O'Neil emphatically. "Sure she has the aristocratic way with her just like her mother, God bless her! 'T is a comfort to me to know we found Miss Eileen's chick for her."

"But we have some one else to find now," said Nora, excitedly. "I've been thinkin', Daddy, how best to be lookin' for her."

"And I'm thinkin' 't would have been better had I left ye in New York," he replied, noting

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with some apprehension her shining eyes and lack of appetite.

"I 'll be eatin' me breakfast right away," she said, taking up a beaten biscuit and starting to munch it diligently. "But do ye mind, Bébée will be comin' to the post office to see if the letters have been sent to her, and—and—"

"Now how do you make that out?" questioned her father.

"Why, 't is perfectly plain," answered Nora. "What the child took me name for I don't know, but she 'll be lookin' for an answer to her message to Mr. Stetson, and all I have to do is to wait at the post office till she comes. 'T is perfectly simple."

"Aye, and she 'll see ye first, and be off like a shot," said Mr. O'Neil, shaking his head dubiously.

"'T is an objection," admitted Nora, "but could n't we give the post office a hint not to let Bébée have any letters unless I was there to see?"

"I 'm afraid they 'd hardly mind ye, dearie,"

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replied her father. "They've got a power of rules and they would n't break 'em for a king."

"Sure and why not?" demanded Nora bristling. "It's *my* letters we're talking about. What right have they to give Nora O'Neil's letters to any one else?"

Her father slapped the table.

"Nonie, ye've the grand head on your shoulders," he replied. "They're your letters, after all, and there's no reason why any other person who tries to obtain possession of 'em should n't be held. 'T is as easy as rollin' off a log, and no need of you nor any one else botherin' to watch the post office. Leave it all to me and I'll arrange that when Bébée goes for her letters they'll keep her till I come."

"Are ye sure they won't let her get away?" Nora asked anxiously. "She's a cute little thing and can get around 'most anybody."

"Maybe 'most anybody," Mr. O'Neil chuckled, "but depend upon it she can't get around Uncle Sam."

As soon as breakfast was finished, Mr. O'Neil

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went away, while Nora waited in the hotel. She was very hopeful and tried not to be impatient, but she could n't help a sigh of disappointment when her father returned at dinner-time without any news except that he had arranged to have Bébée detained if she appeared at the post office.

Early in the afternoon Mr. O'Neil was off again and, though he suggested that Nora should take a drive about the city, she shook her head.

"I'd rather stay in, Daddy," she answered. "'T would be awful if she came and me not here."

So through slowly dragging hours she waited alone with a book in her lap which she made no attempt to read.

A sharp knock set her heart beating with excitement.

"Come in," she called, and a negro boy entered, leaving the door half open behind him.

"A ge'men to see you, missy," he said, showing all of his white teeth in a broad grin, as he handed her a card.

She took it from the tray and read:

"Captain Dennis Burke."

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"I will not see him," she cried imperiously, starting to her feet, but at that moment a man entered hurriedly.

"I beg your pardon," he burst out, "but I could n't wait and, seeing the door open, I—I just came in. Where is she?" he ended, glancing anxiously about the room.

Nora was far from pleased at this uncere-
monious entrance, but as she scrutinized the man before her her resentment lost something of its keenness. He was obviously a gentleman, tall, handsome, and very blond, with extremely blue eyes set in a face burned brown by the sun.

"He looks like a sailor," was Nora's thought, but aloud she said, "Whom did you wish to see?"

"Eleanor O'Neil," he answered.

"I am Eleanor O'Neil."

Captain Burke smiled down on her genially, but he was evidently a little perplexed.

"Well, at any rate, you are not the Eleanor O'Neil I'm looking for," he protested mildly. "Please tell me where she is?" he added with some impatience.

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"I'm the only Eleanor O'Neil I know," she answered stiffly, not at all understanding what the man wanted of her. All that she knew of Dennis Burke was very much against him. Mr. Walker, the detective, had said his neighbors had driven him out of the town and burned his home, but worse than this, the mere mention of his name had caused Bébée to flee from those who loved her best. Nora made up her mind not to be deceived by his pleasing looks and kindly manner.

"You know this is very serious," Captain Burke remarked. "Are you the Eleanor O'Neil who lives at the Astor House in New York?"

"Yes," answered Nora, nodding.

"And was it you, who received Mr. Stetson's telegram on the train at Philadelphia?"

Again Nora nodded and Captain Burke's face fell.

"Then may I ask," he went on, putting his hat down on the marble topped table and fumbling in his pocket, "why it was you sent me this let-

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ter?" and he took out an Astor House envelope without a stamp or post-mark which he handed to the puzzled girl opposite him.

"I never sent you a letter in my life!" she exclaimed.

"It is signed with your name," the gentleman declared significantly. "You'd better read it."

Nora drew forth a folded paper and with it one of the small photographs of Bébée, and at once she was on her guard. Captain Burke was looking for the child. That was clear now, and Nora did not mean to help him find her. Indeed she was determined to shield Bébée from this dreaded man at whatever cost, but a glance at the opening line of the little note brought a shock, and she read it through with increasing bewilderment.

"My dearest Papa—The house is all burned down and I am named O'Neil and live in New York at the Astor House with Uncle Tim so don't go back to Georgia for they will hurt you but come to see me. I have been working hard

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to learn to write so I could send you this and I will always love you even if you are a reniged and a tratore. Your loving little Eleanor.

“P.S. This picture is so you will know me.”

“How did you get this?” asked Nora when she finished.

“It was put into one of those needle-cases, or ‘housewives’ as they call them, that were sent out to the soldiers,” answered Captain Burke. “The address requested, as you doubtless know, that it be passed from hand to hand until it reached the father of the child whose picture was enclosed. The letter at that time was in a smaller envelope. But what object did you have in writing it?” he added insistently.

“I did not write it,” replied Nora shortly.

“But you know who did?” Captain Burke said with a keen glance at her.

Nora considered the situation a moment before she spoke again. Here was an entirely unexpected complication. This man was Bébée’s father. There was no doubt of that, but he was

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a renegade and a traitor, for the child had written so herself, and Nora had no intention of helping him, in spite of his blue eyes and winning smile.

"Yes," she said at length. "Yes, it was Bébée who wrote the letter, but I don't know why she signed my name."

"It's her own name," explained Captain Burke. "I never called her Bébée after—when she was the only Eleanor. Where is she?" he ended abruptly.

"I don't know," Nora answered. "She went away from us about a month ago. We could n't find her again, though we did everything."

"Went away from you?" cried Captain Burke. "Where was Mammy? She would never have left the child out of her sight."

"She never lived with us," Nora explained. "It's all mixed up. She and Bébée got separated during some riots in New York. It was a long time before we found Mandy."

"Who is Mandy?" asked Bébée's father abruptly.

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"Mandy Mandlebaum," said Nora, equally impatient. "Bébée's mammy."

Captain Burke threw back his head and laughed harshly.

"Mandlebaum!" he exclaimed. "Mammy!"

"Well, when we found her," said Nora, hurriedly, for she was beginning to be very anxious to be rid of the man, "she did n't want to stay with us. Perhaps Bébée has gone back to her."

"Where is Mammy living? Do you never inquire there?"

"Oh, yes!" Nora acknowledged, "but she had moved."

"She's got the child!" declared the Captain positively. "Where did she live?"

Nora gave him the address readily. She was quite willing that he should have all the information he would obtain in that quarter. Her one desire now was to have him leave Washington; then, if she once found Bébée, she planned to hide her safely away somewhere. Give her up she would not.

"He's a renegade and a traitor," she repeated

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to herself, trying to stifle the feeling that she was being cruel in withholding any information she possessed. "Mr. Hale's book thinks nothing is too great a punishment if you are false to your country, and I guess it's right."

The gentleman noted the address and consulted his watch.

"You'll let me know if you find her," suggested Nora cunningly.

"I'll be glad to," he said courteously. "I can't stop now to thank you for the kindness I feel sure you've shown my little girl or to hear all the details I'm anxious to learn. I must go at once if I am to catch the first train to New York. I have no time to waste in my search, as my furlough is very short, but I hope to see you in the future and to make more suitable acknowledgment of my obligations to you." He bowed and was gone.

"He's a very polite spy," gasped Nora, "and I almost like him; but I don't mean to forget he's a traitor. Anyhow, he shan't have my Bébée if I can help it."

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She went back to the table, trying to still the uneasy feeling in her heart. For a moment there was uppermost in her thoughts a cause for anxiety other than Bébée.

"Suppose some one were keeping me from Daddy?" she murmured, half aloud; and then to quiet her conscience, "But he's a renegade and a traitor. She says so herself."

She sat down again near the window her thoughts in such a whirl that many minutes passed without her realizing it.

Suddenly she came to herself at the sound of much bustling in the hall as the door was flung open violently.

"I've got her, Nonie!" came a shout, and with a cry of joy Nora darted forward and the two girls were hugged tight in each other's arms, too full of happiness to speak.

Mr. O'Neil stood over them, fairly beaming, and saying again and again, "'T was me that found her, Nonie. I picked her up at the post office. Sure, ye'll never be sayin' now I'm not good at findin' people."

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A moment later Mammy came in somewhat out of breath from trying to keep up with Mr. O'Neil but with a wide smile on her kindly face.

"You'll come back to live with us again?" was Nora's first question. "I just can't get along without you, dearie, I'm that lonesome."

"So lonesome, Nonie," murmured Bébée mechanically.

"Did n't you miss me at all?" coaxed Nora, and the words in her pretty Irish voice touched some chord in Bébée's heart, for she suddenly began to sob.

"I cried myself to sleep every night," she acknowledged, "but I can't come back, because you would n't want me if you knew."

"But I *do* know and I *do* want you," interrupted Nora. "Your father is a traitor, but I don't see how *you* could help it."

"Oh, don't you, Nonie?" exclaimed Bébée. "Truly, don't you? Why all the little girls down South would n't play with me because of it and, though I put my head up in the air higher than

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they did when they were looking, I cried when they could n't see me," she confessed.

Nora patted her lovingly.

"They were horrid girls!" she declared vehemently.

"No, they were n't. Zaidee Taliafero was just as sweet as she could be, but when the Boys in Gray came into town and I was the only little girl without the Stars and Bars and did n't throw any flowers they all acted as if I was n't there."

"But, why?" asked the puzzled Nora.

"I—I was a 'zample," answered Bébée hesitatingly. "They were showing every one how to treat the enemies of the State."

"Did they burn your house down as an example?" asked Nora seriously.

"No," Bébée answered, "they only *let* it burn. I mean no one would help put it out. It was after my papa had left. He had to go," she hastened to say, answering Nora's unspoken question, "for they meant to put him in their army and not let him get away. Something like they did to Mr. Nolan in 'The Man without a

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Country,' I reckon," she explained shamefacedly.

"Was it the man with the hooked nose who set fire to your house?"

"Yes," said Bébée.

"And you will come back to us?" Nora pleaded anxiously.

Bébée considered this carefully.

"Does Uncle Tim want me?" she asked at last, with a glance in his direction.

"He does," Nora answered positively. "He's been most as lonesome for you as I have."

"Then I'll come," agreed Bébée gladly. "But what are we going to do with Mammy?"

"We'll take her, too," said Nora, who would have cheerfully agreed to furnish a home to a sacred white elephant if she could have had Bébée on no other conditions. "And now do go in and let Mammy put on your green dress. I made Mam'selle tuck it in, thinking you'd need it," and Nora led her and the old colored woman into the adjoining room. "I'll be there in just a minute," she ended, as she ran back to her father,

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throwing her arms about his neck in an ecstasy of joy.

"Oh, Daddy!" she cried, "I 'm so happy!"

"'Tis easy to see that," said Mr. O'Neil, returning her hug.

"But we must get away from here at once," Nora went on hurriedly. "Bébée can't stay here, you know. 'T is best, I 'm thinkin', that we should have that little house we 've been talkin' of right off and not wait till the war is finished. If we could go out to the country somewhere and change our name to Smith, or even Jones, why—"

"Now what are you talkin' about?" interrupted Mr. O'Neil, wholly bewildered. "Is it me change me name? And what for, may I be askin'?"

"So that he can't find us, of course," cried Nora. "He 'll take Bébée from us, Daddy."

"Who would take her?" demanded Mr. O'Neil.

"Dennis Burke, the traitor!" exclaimed Nora, her voice raised from excitement.

Their talk had been so vehement that a knock had passed unheeded, but even as Nora spoke

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Captain Burke opened the door and heard every word.

"Dennis Burke a traitor!" he cried as he strode into the room. "Is it you who put that idea into little Eleanor's head?"

For a moment there was an awkward silence, then Captain Burke, controlling himself with an effort, spoke more calmly to Mr. O'Neil.

"I missed the train to New York and came back to try to thank you, sir. Now I am doubly glad I did, because it gave me the chance to hear what your daughter has just said. She talks like a secessionist, but I cannot believe that a Union man like you will condemn me for siding with the North."

"You mean that you are not a traitor and a spy?" faltered Nora.

"I mean that I was called both, and many another ugly name, because I was a Union sympathizer in a secession State," Captain Burke explained almost passionately. "I mean that, after I went away, the people I thought I could trust turned their backs on my little daughter. They

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would n't raise a hand to save my property when a personal enemy used the cloak of party feeling to excuse his destroying it. I mean that Mammy took Eleanor to Charleston only to be told that there was no roof there to cover a Union sympathizer's child and that those of attainted blood had better go up North where they belonged."

"But you were safe somewhere while Bébée was without a roof," said Nora disdainfully.

"I was with Grant and Sherman in Missouri and Tennessee," replied Captain Burke. "Sometimes I had canvas over my head, but never a roof that Eleanor could have shared."

"No, no," protested Nora in a tone of despair. "Don't say you are a Union soldier. You are a traitor. Bébée thinks so."

"Then, baby as she was, she must have taken to heart some of the insults aimed at me down South. I'm no traitor even to my State, for I asked to be sent to Grant in Virginia rather than to go with Uncle Billy Sherman on his march to the sea."

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Nora turned from him, struck to the quick, and opened the door to her bedroom.

"Bébée!" she called, "your father is here." Then she threw her arms around Mr. O'Neil. "Daddy! Daddy!" she sobbed, "I 'm so sorry he is n't a renegade, for you are all I have left now."

At her words Bébée had run in.

"Papa! Papa!" she cried at sight of Captain Burke, and flung herself on him.

Mammy followed more slowly.

"Am dat you, Marse Denny!" she exclaimed. "You ain't no ghost, is you? Oh, glory be, our troubles is over if you-all is come back."

Explanations of every sort were now in order and soon the party were occupied in clearing up obscure points.

"What I want to know," Mr. O'Neil questioned Bébée, "is why you never told us your name?"

"Mammy said not to," Bébée answered "When we said 'Burke' down South they asked,

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‘Any relation to Dennis Burke, the traitor?’ and then they would n’t do anything for us. Even the shopkeepers would n’t sell us food—and when they burned New York because we were there—”

“Burned New York,” asked her father in astonishment.

“Yes,” answered Bébée wisely, “what they called the Draft Riots, but I knew it was all because of us. Then they lost us for a while, but when the Astor House was set on fire this year—”

“My child!” ejaculated Mr. O’Neil. “You never have been thinkin’ that all those awful happenings were aimed at your little head?”

“You don’t know,” said Bébée. “It was always that Mr. Hitchens who burned our house down, down South. I saw him every time.”

Captain Burke started to his feet.

“The cur!” he cried, and then, controlling himself with an effort he went on, “Eleanor, your father is no traitor and you can take his word that it was not on your account. This man is an enemy of your country, not of yours, so you can cease to fear him.”

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"Oh, he won't come back to New York any more," said Bébée contentedly. "I 'm quite sure he 'll be afraid of Mr. Stetson."

"What became of all the bonds I gave to you, Mammy?" asked Captain Burke, turning to the old colored woman.

"I 's got 'em, sir," said Mammy. "I 's mighty sorry to tell you, Marse Denny, they ain't no good! No one won't take 'em for chickens or vegitibles. They has no manneh of respect for the writin' on 'em. The nex' time you goes away, Marse Denny, you leave me a stockin' full of good, hard, two-bit pieces if you has n't got gold."

Mr. O'Neil and Captain Burke exchanged glances of understanding. It was of no avail to attempt to explain to Mammy that she could have had plenty of money to care for herself and Bébée.

"We were going back to Georgia to dig up the silver Mammy buried," Bébée told them. "She insists that I must be educated like a lady, and washing is such a slow way to make a fortune."

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"And to think," said Mr. O'Neil to Captain Burke, "that I had the sharpest men in the country lookin' for ye, and 't is a little child finds ye after all."

Captain Burke seemed surprised.

"Looking for me?" he questioned.

"To be sure," answered Mr. O'Neil. "Because of little Patricia Cochrane, of course."

"Do you know Patricia?" asked Bébée in tones of astonishment, while the gentlemen talked together. "'T was she gave me the chain Lady Castleton has. She's wearing one of mine for a remembrance."

"Sure, I'll give you a better chain than that—but why did ye write to Mr. Stetson for me letters?" asked Nora, conscious of a little jealousy of Patricia, as she suddenly changed the subject.

"I did n't, Nonie, I wrote for my own," said Bébée, surprised.

"I forgot," acknowledged Nora. "You are 'Eleanor,' too. Your father called you that."

"But you're 'Nora,'" said Bébée, puzzled in turn.

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"Just as you are 'Bébé,' " smiled Nora, then a sudden thought came to her, and she turned to Captain Burke with anxiety in her face.

"You—you said you were a soldier, did n't you?"

"Yes," answered the Captain.

"Well, you can't be takin' the child to the war with you," exclaimed Nora. "They don't have young ladies' seminaries in the army, do they? So won't you please be leavin' her with us?"

Captain Burke looked at Mr. O'Neil with a smile of interrogation.

"Ye need n't be expectin' me not to second that invitation," said the latter with a twinkle in his eye. "I'd be disowned did I hint at anything else."

"You'll leave her with us," said Nora fairly glorified, as she read consent in the Captain's face. "Sure you're the nicest man! I liked ye even when I could n't bear ye."

"And when the war is over an' it won't be long now, the poor byes in the South is almost at their

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last ditch, I 'm hopin' you 'll be settlin' in New York," said Mr. O'Neil.

"And if ye do," interrupted Nora, "you must tell me where you 're going to live and I 'll beg Daddy to buy the next door on both sides and live in it."

The gentlemen laughed heartily at this, but Mr. O'Neil said gently:

"I was goin' to say, that when the war was over I 'm hopin' our love for Bébée and hers for us will be makin' one family of the two."

"I think it will have to, Papa," Bébée put in, gravely. "Uncle Tim needs two girls to take care of him."

"And, Daddy," said Nora, unutterably happy, "remember my fortune? How it said I would never be parted for long from my best friend, who would have my name."

"Aye, that 's so," agreed Mr. O'Neil.

"And I did n't get my wish either," said Nora, suddenly remembering. Then she looked at Captain Burke. "But I 'm glad of that!" she declared.



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